

The

Julerose

Zine



Cover piece was done by @DaHoomanPrincess with @sternschauer-detektiv doing Juleka & Rose's line art.

This zine wouldn't have been possible without all of its contributors, so a huge thank you goes to everyone who participated and was able to make this zine possible!

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*This zine has a tumblr account - @julerose-zine .
Follow it for any news regarding the zine and to be informed when application forms to participate in the next edition will be out!*

Everything I Need

by @coffeebanana on tumblr
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CW: character injury, mentions of blood

Pigella cowered behind a chimney, wincing as the ground shook below her. Today's Akuma was a tad more explosive than the usual fare, and even though Pigella felt somewhat guilty hiding up on a rooftop, she was glad to be out of harm's way. Besides, Ladybug had asked her to stay put until she was needed, so it wasn't like she had *reason* to feel bad.

In any case, any relief she might have felt evaporated the second Ladybug dropped down beside her, clutching Tigress' limp form in her arms.

"I need you to stay with her," Ladybug said simply.

She tried to pass Tigress over, but Pigella instinctively stepped back upon noticing the smears of red staining Tigress' suit along the edges of a red cloth bandage—well, Pigella *hoped* it had been red to begin with. Because, if not...

Pigella shook her head. "I'm not great with blood."

Her heart thudded as she waited for a response. Was she even *allowed* to say no to Ladybug? Then again, if a teammate's safety was at stake, it didn't seem fair *not* to be upfront.

The sight of blood reminded Pigella of uncomfortable chairs and impatient nurses. The smell reminded her of emergency room visits where her mother fought back tears. Even the *thought* of blood made Pigella weak in the knees, and Ladybug really needed to know that she wasn't the person best for this job.

Except...Ladybug didn't seem to *get* it.

"Please," she said. "Take her someplace safe. She..." Something unreadable passed through Ladybug's eyes. "I really think she'll feel safest with you."

Pigella highly doubted that. She and Tigress hadn't had many interactions—Tigress was a fairly regular part of the team, but Pigella's powers weren't as well-suited to combat. As such, the Akumas they were called upon to face didn't normally overlap. And whenever they *did* work together, Pigella had the oddest sense that Tigress didn't really want to talk to her. She was never rude or anything, just...distant. Which was odd, because Tigress seemed to have a really good time hanging out with the rest of the heroes.

As much as Pigella tried not to take it personally, well...she was *used* to people liking her. Despite her best efforts, it bothered her when people didn't, especially when she hadn't done anything to deserve it. But Pigella wasn't being spiteful here: she genuinely didn't think she was equipped to handle this.

She didn't get a chance to plead her case as another explosion shook the ground.

"I'm sorry," Ladybug said, transferring Tigress into Pigella's arms before she could protest. "I'm running out of time—I've got to get back to Chat and the team."

Pigella didn't miss the glint of fear in Ladybug's eyes, or the way she separated Chat from the rest of the heroes. It reminded her of the looks Juleka gave Rose on the days she had doctor's appointments. And *that* kept Pigella from arguing any further.

She could understand Ladybug's fear of being separated from someone she loved.

"Okay," Pigella whispered, trying not to let her arms shake.

"Thank you," Ladybug said, the relief on her face evident. "Just get her someplace safe and lay low. I'll call you if we end up needing your power, but I think we're going to have to

change strategies anyways, so don't worry too much." She paused. "She'll need something new to stop the bleeding—I used my Lucky Charm to stop the bleeding, but I'll have to detransform and recharge my Kwami soon. I'll...try to give you as long as I can."

Pigella took a deep breath through her mouth and chanced a look down, noting that the bandage did in fact have black spots on it, and the red *wasn't* entirely from blood. The folded cloth was secured to Tigress' midsection with what looked to be a belt—wait, was that Chat's belt? This was insane; Pigella couldn't do this. Nobody had taught her how to handle a situation like this.

But then...she doubted anyone had taught Ladybug or Chat Noir these sorts of skills either. They were about her age, and they dealt with the kinds of things *nobody* should. And if they were counting on Pigella, just this once, she could do it.

She relaxed a little, her heart squeezing as Tigress let out a grunt and shifted in her arms. She didn't open her eyes, but shivered and leaned her head closer to Pigella's chest. Hopefully Pigella's pounding heartbeat wouldn't wake her up.

"You can count on me, Ladybug," Pigella said, trying to sound determined.

Ladybug smiled. "I know I can."

She tossed her yo-yo and disappeared into the smoke-filled sky. Pigella had to bite down on her lip to keep herself from calling Ladybug back.

A couple minutes later, Pigella found cover, ducking through the smashed windows of a five-star restaurant. The Akuma seemed to be heading away from the area, so she assumed it would be safe. With any luck, she might also find some help.

"Hello?" she called out, her trembling voice echoing back. "Is anyone here?"

There was no response, not even when she crossed to the other side of the restaurant and tried again. They were on their own.

Tigress groaned, bringing Pigella back to the problem at hand. She didn't know how much time she'd have before Ladybug detransformed, so she had to work quickly. A quick glance around revealed a long table which was bare save for a tablecloth and cloth napkins. *Perfect.*

Pigella carried Tigress over and set her down. Tigress' head turned to the side, and she let out a grunt, her face scrunching up in pain: she must not be as out of it as Pigella had thought.

"Hey," Pigella whispered, grabbing one of the napkins and trying not to think about what she had to do next. Her voice trembled as she continued, "You're going to be okay. I've got you."

She hoped it wasn't a lie.

Pigella pressed down on the cloth covering Tigress' wound. She might not know much about first aid, but applying pressure was the most basic thing. At least, she *thought* so.

Once she'd secured the cloth with one hand, she used her other to undo the belt with shaking fingers. Tigress whimpered, and Pigella blinked back tears. She grabbed the napkin—the very *white* napkin, although it certainly wouldn't stay that way—and pressed it over the spotted, red cloth. Then she squeezed her eyes shut and hoped for the best.

She only noticed when the Lucky Charm disappeared because her hand slipped. It slipped *too much*, which Rose took to mean that Tigress' suit must have been coated in blood. She took a deep breath and chanced a glance, freezing up for a moment when she noticed

blood seeping through the edges of the napkin. Then Tigress let out another moan, and a wave of fear snapped Pigella out of her trance.

Her whole body trembled as she reached over Tigress to grab a second napkin, but she managed to secure it on top of the first. Hopefully, that would be enough. She inhaled sharply through her mouth when a spot of blood appeared some time later, but it didn't grow much larger as the seconds ticked by.

Her relief was short-lived, demolished by the realization that there was nothing left to do. No more distraction. She was the only person keeping Tigress alive at this point, and she knew she wouldn't be able to re-secure the belt while keeping pressure on the wound. All she could do now was sit there and *wait*.

She almost felt like she could taste the blood—her mouth flooded with the bitter, metallic tang of fear. Her vision blurred with tears. She felt like the walls of the room were closing in on her, stealing her breath as though *she* were the one bleeding out.

Tigress coughed, her abdomen seizing under Pigella's hand. Through her blurry vision, Pigella couldn't even tell if the napkins were still in place. This was too much. Too heavy.

Her *limbs* felt heavy.

Somehow, she managed to pull out one of the chairs with her free hand, kneeling down before her knees gave out. She let out a shaky sob and focused on taking slow, steady breaths through her mouth.

She wished Juleka were here. Juleka might not have known what to do either, but at least the sight of blood didn't render her useless. And she would have known how to distract Pigella by whispering sweet nothings in her ears or squeezing her shoulders in encouragement.

If it weren't for the Akuma, she'd be with Juleka now—a thought that made her heart squeeze with guilt. They'd made plans earlier to bake cookies. Giant chocolate chip cookies with gooey centers. Pigella knew the recipe by heart, like she knew the way Juleka always smiled after she took her first bite or what her laughter sounded like when Rose bounced impatiently by the oven.

Right now she must be confused as to why Rose hadn't bothered to show up. Or, worse, she might have realized her girlfriend was caught up in the attack, and she might be sick with worry.

Pigella shook her head, trying to dispel those thoughts. She needed something else to focus on, so she started whispering the cookie recipe. "Three cups flour, one teaspoon baking soda, a half teaspoon baking powder..."

Pigella's eyes flew open when Tigress shuddered, and she immediately latched onto Tigress' unfocused gaze. Tigress was *awake*. Pigella wasn't sure if that was better or worse.

Tigress mumbled something, her words indecipherable as her face scrunched up with pain.

"Wh-what did you say?" Pigella asked.

Tigress groaned and let her eyes flutter closed. She forced them open again a few moments later, her gaze more focused. "Don't forget the salt, Ro."

Ro? There was no way Tigress had called her that. Pigella must have imagined it—she *had* been daydreaming about Juleka's hands around her waist, after all. Even if Juleka *did* like to tease Rose about adding salt ever since that one time she'd accidentally added a tablespoon instead of a teaspoon. But it had to be a coincidence. Nobody save for Ladybug was supposed to know her hero identity, and even if they did, the only person who called her Ro was...

No. Absolutely not.

Pigella couldn't think about that possibility. There was no way she'd keep herself together if the person on the table was... *No*.

"Y-you're right," Pigella said, straining to keep her voice even. There probably wasn't much point in that—she was certain her expression spelled out her terror, clear as day. "I almost forgot the salt."

Tigress gave a strained smile and shifted her arm, wincing as she moved. She wrapped her fingers around Pigella's wrist—the one that wasn't pressing down on the napkins. "I'm glad you're here."

Pigella could only nod, worried that if she spoke she'd blurt out that this was the last place she wanted to be.

Tigress studied her. "How bad is it?"

"It's..." Pigella glanced over. Was the spot of blood she'd noticed earlier starting to grow? She pulled her hand free from Tigress and grabbed another napkin to press on top of the other two. "You'll be fine."

"I'm sure." Her voice was small, and when Pigella looked over again she noted Tigress was considerably paler than before as her eyes fluttered shut. "How are you hanging in, Ro?"

Ro? Again? And why was Tigress asking about *her*?

She opted to ignore the question. "I'm Pigella."

"Mhm." Tigress' tone was hard to interpret through her rattling breaths, but she didn't sound convinced. Pigella shook away the thoughts as Tigress shuddered.

“How do you feel?” Pigella asked.

“Cold. Tired.” Tigress gritted her teeth. “Also, *ow*.”

“Can I do anything?”

Tigress smiled, and this one seemed more relaxed, somehow. Pigella wasn’t convinced that was a good thing.

“Tell me a story?” Tigress asked.

Pigella couldn’t help but smile. “My girlfriend always asks me to do that when she wants a distraction.”

“You must be a good storyteller, then.”

“I don’t think so. I think she just loves me.”

There was a long pause before Tigress said, “I imagine she does.”

Pigella hummed noncommittally. Thoughts of Juleka were suddenly too scary to dwell on, because *Juleka* called her Ro and teased her about salt and asked her for stories. How could Tigress treat her the exact same way?

“You love her, too?” Tigress asked suddenly. She reached for Pigella’s hand again, squeezing when she found purchase.

“So much,” Pigella said. “Loving her is as easy as breathing.” Actually, loving Juleka was currently a hell of a lot *easier* than keeping her breaths steady. “I’d do anything for her.”

Tigress sighed, releasing Pigella's wrist. She mumbled something, but Pigella couldn't interpret it. Pigella searched for something—*anything*—to say, but her mind was blank. And she couldn't very well tell a story when her words were glued to the back of her throat.

There was *something* she could do, though. Ladybug had said they probably wouldn't need to use her power...so, maybe she could at least put it to some other use.

"Gift," Pigella whispered. Tigress' eyes blinked open again as Pigella waved her tambourine, and a gift box appeared in the air. Pigella reached out and lifted the holographic lid. A projection shone in the air between them, ringed with pink—but the background inside had the same awful, blue and yellow tiles as the Couffaines' kitchen.

For a moment, Pigella thought she'd somehow used her power wrong—that she'd somehow summoned *her own* greatest desire. But if it had been her fantasy she'd be looking into Juleka's warm, brown eyes. Instead, she saw her own blue ones sparkling back at her.

"Oh my God," Pigella's voice quavered. "Oh my *God*."

Tigress'—*Juleka's*—fingers found hers again and squeezed. "Shh, Ro. It's okay."

It was *Juleka's* wish.

That's why Pigella watched *herself* twirl around the kitchen, pretending her spoon was a magic wand. She fought back a sob when she heard Juleka giggle in the background. What if she never heard that laugh again—her favourite sound in the world?

Juleka was often quiet, but the way she loved? That was loud. That was Pigella's entire world, and she'd be lost without it, lost if she ever had to bake cookies without someone to tease her about the salt.

The image faded, and Pigella panicked when she realized Tigress' eyes had fallen shut again. But there was still a small smile on her face, one which widened when Pigella threaded their fingers together and squeezed.

"I l-ove y-you, Jules," she managed, choking on sobs. "J-just ha-hang on, m'kay?"

Pigella wanted nothing more than to crawl over and kiss every inch of Tigress' face. To run her fingers through her hair and whisper sweet nothings in her ears. She wanted the vision to come back, so she could dive inside it and finish the cookies. They'd take them to the park—maybe invite some friends, or maybe not. She'd pick flowers and tuck them into Juleka's hair.

But she had to keep holding the bandages, so instead she settled for picking up Tigress' hand and pressing a kiss to her knuckles. She held on tight as she closed her eyes, feeling tears slip down her cheeks. She did her best to shut out the world and focus only on Tigress' breathing, which grew weaker and weaker the longer they waited for the cure.

It probably didn't take that long, but it felt like a lifetime.

Pigella didn't notice anything had changed until she felt Tigress shift beneath the napkins. Napkins that were now clean, Pigella realized when she dared to take a peek. She stared, wide-eyed, as Tigress sat up and swung her legs over the side of the table, then she launched herself into Tigress' arms, the force almost knocking them both onto the floor.

Tigress let out a stuttered laugh as she tightened her arms around Pigella, and suddenly it was too much. Any tears Pigella had managed to suppress before burst free like a dam breaking, and Tigress' arms holding her tightly were the only things keeping her tethered to reality.

"Shhh, Ro. I'm okay. I've got you."

Pigella squeezed her tighter.

The cure had brought people back into the restaurant—Pigella could tell from their scattered conversations—but Pigella couldn't care less what they thought of seeing a hero in tears. All she cared about was *Juleka's* heart beating beneath her ear. *Juleka's* arms encircling her and lifting her up. *Juleka's* lips pressing a gentle kiss to Pigella's forehead as she carried Pigella out of the restaurant.

Pigella didn't care where they were going, so long as Tigress was by her side.

"Don't do that again," Pigella whispered as they turned into an alley. Her transformation timed out as Tigress set her down and whispered her own detransformation phrase.

Juleka kept her arms wrapped around Rose as she spoke. "I can't promise that, Ro. You know that. We're heroes."

Rose shook her head against Juleka's chest. "I didn't feel like a hero today."

Juleka's breath hitched. "Me neither," she whispered. "But you *were*. And you're *my* hero every day. There's a reason I recognized you right away, you know? You just...you make the world a better place. I always avoided you as a hero because I was afraid I'd give my identity away too."

"I *should* have figured you out. I feel like I let you down."

"Never," Juleka insisted. She pulled back slightly, just enough to look Rose straight in the eyes. "Nothing you do could ever disappoint me."

Rose shook her head, trying to keep her eyes from filling with tears once more. "It's not fair. What Hawk Moth's doing, putting people in danger...putting *you* in danger..."

“No,” Juleka agreed, “it’s not. But how fair is it to the rest of the world that I’m lucky enough to be loved by you?”

Rose’s heartbeat sped up, and this time it had nothing to do with fear. It had *everything* to do with Juleka’s eyes filling her with a warmth she could scarcely compute. Rose stretched up onto her tiptoes and slid her hands up to Tigress’ shoulders, breathing in the faint scent of vanilla body spray—Juleka already smelled like cookies.

“I’m the lucky one,” Rose whispered.

Juleka leaned down, her breath warming Rose’s lips as she spoke. “Agree to disagree.”

Seconds later their lips met, and the kiss was every bit the story Rose hadn’t been able to tell earlier. Juleka’s hand cupping her cheek told the tale of their tender movie nights spent cuddling on the couch. The hints of mint on Juleka’s breath were reminiscent of candy cane kisses they’d shared after going ice skating for their first date. That might have been one of the first times Rose had fallen for her—quite literally when they stepped on the ice, hand in hand, and she stepped right onto a rut—but she’d only fallen harder every single day since.

When they pulled away from each other, the look in Juleka’s eyes was everything Rose could ever need.





by Luppa

Arcane Informers and their optimistic maid friends

by @twilightshine3456 on Instagram
beta read by @DaHoomanPrincess on tumblr

Disguises.

Juleka was used to them at this point.

Every other day, a new image, a new person, a new countenance.

But the person beneath still stays the same.

Every day a new way to camouflage herself, cloaking in a sleazy blanket of latency to hide from the prying eyes of the world.

One wrong step; the result would be an immediate execution.

Satiric, right?

Not really.

She never thought that her life would be like this, spying for the infamous criminal Chat Noir.

But she wasn't really complaining either.

There was an extraordinary thrill in this job, and she loved it.

Besides, she really wasn't agreeing on the terms of him walking on this dangerous path without her.

They have seen the world together, both somewhat abandoned at a young age. It wasn't exactly renunciation, more like being lost. But what hurt more was that they had no idea if their families ever searched for them or not. But they found one another, forming a bond like no other, pertaining the other as their only family member. Juleka was a year older than him, so she willingly became the elder sister he never had, and he served her as any other younger brother would, only wishing for the best for her.

None remembered much about their families, only vague obscure memories dancing around once in a while. They could not even remember their surnames. But they had each other, and they were content with it.

Growing up was not easy, especially in this cruel world. Two little innocent children, what were they capable of anyway. So eventually, the hard way had to be taken.

The first crime Adrien ever committed was stealing a piece of jewel from some noble lady who treated people very poorly. Juleka still remembered how much he cried when she scolded him. But the money was required, and she could not do anything about it. They bought some necessities from it, the rest was donated to the local church.

It has been like that ever since.

Now hidden behind the notorious aliases, Chat Noir and Lady Reflecta, alongside their infamous crew, they continued their operation. And oddly enough, the riches were only stolen from either royalty or nobles. Common citizens were free from their wrath, and were lucky enough to have their benediction, as it seemed. For most of the time the taxes they paid were safely returned to them by some seemingly anonymous person. But everyone knew who these incognito people were.

Although the second in command of the group, the somewhat goth lady wasn't really in the main squad. As the only lady of the troupe, she was very honoured (that and anyone would agree, she was quite the fighter). Her duty was to collect news, seeing she was a master of disguises. Mixing into the crowd and finding out the diamond was child's play for her. And the leader relied on this ability of hers quite a lot.

This day was one of those days when she was out to collect information. Although not in the usual manner.

Complications arose as the raffish outlaw found himself planning a plunder avowedly directed at the royal family. The taxes were not too elevated, but regarding the recent drought and aridity, no condescension was made either. Ergo they decided to take the matter in their own hands. But gerrymandering against the royalty is not the simplest task, and it required lots of accurate tidings. So undoubtedly, Juleka had to develop her ruse. And seemingly, she's succeeded.

Dressed in a very polished dress and frilly sun hat, it was nearly inconceivable to say that she is not from a noble family. As the lady roamed about in the market square with two of her men dressed as guards, a strong deceiving aura was created that fooled the by passers who greeted her with polite exchanges.

The lady perambulated through the shops, originally seeking information. She finally spotted something that could come out to be useful, and a cranked grin manifested itself in her facial features.

The castle was quite persistent about its lex and provisions, going as far as to make uniforms obligatory for the maids, even when they were out of duty. Which actually turned out to be beneficial for the ladies, letting them get the deserved respect. As well as making it easy to spot them. Hence upon noticing the short blonde woman with pixie cut hair, Juleka's worry was resolved. It would be a piece of cake to get information now.

The town square was full of rabble, bustling with laborious exhilaration. The short blonde woman sometimes found it to be quite intimidating; but she was one emblematic outbound person, making new allies was about her hobby. Hence although startled when the seemingly noble lady approached her, she was quick to hide it and greet her with a warm smile.

"How can I help you, miss?"

To say, Juleka was taken aback by the warmth she was offered with. She expected the maids to be passive aggressive and ignorant. But did this little lady change her mindset?

"Good afternoon. I'm actually new here, and I need to buy a gift for my brother. I'm looking for a good clothing store that might offer something suitable for his liking. But I seem to be quite lost amongst all these choices, can you please help me out?"

"I see. Although I'll have to report back soon, I think I can show you the way to the best clothing store that I know of."

"Thank you," the 'noble' lady acknowledged, "that'd be very appreciated."

So, that's precisely how Juleka found herself walking with this royal maid by her side as she chimed continuously about every other thing.

This is getting superficially annoying.

"Hey, what is your name?" Juleka inquired, breaking the ice is necessary to get information; and this lady learnt it the hard way.

"My name's Rose!" She beamed, "Rose Lavlilant."

"Ah I see. That's a very pretty name, Miss Rose."

"Thank you, my lady. May I have the honour of knowing who I'm accompanying today?"

"My name is Juleka," the lady responded, "that should be enough to fill your curiosity."

"Of course my lady." Although inexpressible inquisitiveness sparked in her mind, Rose did not question it any further, for she was well aware of the consequences of inessential curiosity.

"We're almost there," she gulped to change the subject.

"Very well," Juleka responded vacantly, "so miss Rose, you work for the castle, am I right?"

"That's right my lady."

"So how's the manpower nowadays? Many of my guards resigned recently to join the royal sentinels. I heard they're recruiting a lot of people presently. The security must be tight?"

"Oh yes, that's right. But it's mainly because of the upcoming royal ball. The security must be tight, especially because this ball is going to be a way to find a fiancé for our princess."

The words stuck to Juleka more than expected. The lady knew how her honorary brother fancied the princess, and seeing that the princess herself didn't oppose the midnight rendezvous either, she could assume that the sentiment was mutual. Unfortunately, both were dumb enough to never properly confess; only carrying lopsided lovesick grins in the daytime that vexed those who knew to no end.

"The princess is getting married?" Juleka found herself questioning.

"Yes, the fiancé is not chosen yet though. She is given a few days to choose an appropriate candidate, otherwise she would be married off to the prince of Kurtzberg kingdom."

This news would surely be loathed by Adrien huh?

"I see. Most of the security must be around the eastern palace then? Seeing that's where the princess' room is?"

"Yes, but most of the security is still near the treasury. Pardon me my lady, but you seem awfully too interested in the palace security system rather than the engagement arrangements for the princess."

"Ah, you misunderstood me. I'm genuinely curious," Juleka tried to cover up. Looks like this little lady is not as naive as she seems.

"If you say so my lady. Oh look, we've arrived!"

Juleka surveyed the building in front of her. Truly, this little lady did not disappoint. The shop was indeed fit for nobles.

"Thank you, Rose. I appreciate your help very much."

"It was a pleasure my lady."

"You can leave the formalities. In fact, let's be friends. As I said, I'm new here. So I could really use some company."

It was unlikely for a noble to be friends with commoners, but there were exceptions too. The princess herself was a precedent. Rose simply grinned, "the pleasure would all be mine."

Hence, an unlikely friendship was born. A 'noble' lady, whose whereabouts were unknown and a castle maid, who could easily be compared to a living ball of sunshine and happiness.

Numerous information was leaked throughout this epoch, and who says that some feelings weren't exuded? Otherwise why would the men be particularly imparted not to harm the little blonde lady while raiding the castle? And why would a certain damsel make all the delicacies she knew with love and care. Friendship you say? I'm certain friends don't have reveries of

spending time as a couple, do they? But nevertheless, unknowingly they both were in a querencia of redamancy. Every moment spent with each other serving as a fika. Juleka loved this philocalist girl's eunoia. For Rose, the moments spent with this munificence lady were like peiskos. Knowing about the raid that was to strike soon, Juleka felt dysphoric. But the opia she felt every time her eyes met with Rose's were enough to suppress the feeling of adomania and let her know of her own rubatosis. The zenosyne they both felt was odd, but enough to keep the ladies happy in each other's presence. And for now, they're both content with it. In each other's presence, wishing for the best possible future.



She Means Everything To Me

by LizzyBeth

beta read by JuliaC

Juleka Couffaine could honestly say she was happy; she and her wife Rose had been running a successful flower shop for the last 50 years and had been married just as long. And now she got to celebrate all her years of marriage once again, surrounded by her closest friends and family.

To say the wedding went off without a hitch would be a *stretch*: there was the debacle of who was going to be walked down the aisle (Rose was the obvious choice in her mind), and what the colour scheme would be (Juleka always thought of her and Rose as a 'Mixed Berry' colour scheme), and a bunch of tiny details that Rose was stressing about (plus the flower debacle).

"Juleka?" Rose asked, glancing up from her computer.

"Yes, darling?" Juleka responded, planting a soft kiss on the top of her fiancée's head.

"Are you sure you don't want to get married on the boat? I know you said the beach was fine but-" Rose began.

"Rose, I *love* the idea of marrying you on the beach, it's perfect for us! It combines your eccentric personality with my more *toned-down* characteristics in a beautiful way," Juleka said calmly.

"But-"

"Rose, trust me. There isn't a better place on this earth for us to get married," Juleka said, wrapping her arms around the blonde.

"Are you sure?" Rose asked, nervously biting her lower lip, eyes travelling around the room.

"Yes, I am," she responded sincerely, pulling the blonde into a tighter embrace. Rose's shoulders relaxed, she could tell Juleka had meant it.

"Jule?" Rose called from her vanity.

"Yes, Roe?" Juleka responded, as she slipped her purple evening gown on her aged figure.

"Are you excited?" the frosty-haired woman asked, applying foundation to her wrinkled face.

"*Very*," the noirette responded, slipping some silver bracelets on her wrists.

"Can you believe it's been 50 years since the wedding?" Rose said.

"No, it feels like we were running around that beach, scrambling to make sure everything was ready, and putting poor Alix through hell, just yesterday. Time really has flown by," Juleka responded with a reminiscent sigh.

"Hey! At least, this time, we don't have to worry about the florist messing up," Rose said with a giggle.

"Flowers! Where are the flowers, Alix?!" the blonde shrieked, her fists resting at the sides of her head.

"Calm down, Rosey, everything will be fine," the redhead said calmly.

“How do you *know* that? Everything could be *ruined!*” Rose said dramatically.

“All because you don't have some stuffy flowers?” Alix asked, lifting an eyebrow.

“Yes!” Rose yelled.

Alix pulled up the sleeves of her top and gave her an encouraging smile. “Okay! Then, let's find these flowers!”

As it turned out, the flowers ended up arriving 6 minutes before the ceremony was set to start. Needless to say, Rose spent the next 2 hours panicking in her dressing room over whether or not to push the ceremony back, while Alix spent just as long yelling at the florist over the phone.

“Hey Roe, can you help me with this necklace?” Juleka said, after struggling to get it on herself.

“For sure Jule! Just gimme a sec to finish putting on my mascara!” her wife responded, very concentrated on the task at hand.

As Rose got up from her chair, Juleka felt a rush of butterflies invade her stomach, as she walked closer and closer towards her gorgeous wife.

As Rose took each side of the necklace from Juleka's hands, a certain spark that Juleka hadn't felt in 50 years caressed her skin once more—and it was *captivating*. Everything about it made Juleka shiver in delight; she knew Rose felt it too, in the way she fastened the necklace on Juleka's neck, and let her gentle fingers rest there just a few seconds longer.

Juleka was never one to cry, but watching Rose walk down the aisle brought tears to her eyes. This was *real*, it wasn't some crazy fantasy anymore; it was her reality, and she couldn't be happier.

As the wedding ballad finished and Rose took her place in front of Juleka, she was completely and utterly *mesmerized*.

As the officiant spoke, all Juleka could see was Rose; there were still traces of the girl she had first fallen in love with, but the woman that stood in front of her was more than Juleka could have ever imagined.

“Miss Couffaine if you could, please recite your vows.”

“When I first met Rose she was an enigma of sorts, wild, crazy, mysterious, and, above all else, *kind*. I hadn't given much thought to the idea of liking girls, but eventually, I found myself staring at Rose, and wondering, 'Am I allowed to look at her like that?' In my defence, she's just so nice to look at! I always thought I would be okay with admiring her from afar, but then-”

“- She asked me to go on a date with her, and I thought to myself 'There's no way I could ever be this lucky', but I was. I've been able to spend the last 50 years relishing in just how lucky I was. My life would have never been the same if Rose Lavillant hadn't walked into it, and I thank the stars every day for it,” Juleka repeated, with a bright smile adorning her face, a smile similar to the one she wore on her wedding day .

“And Mrs. Lavillant, if you could please repeat your vows.”

“I have always loved Juleka, and while that love may have started as platonic, it very quickly turned into something more-

“- And for a long time, I didn't know what more was. The idea of being anything other than straight had never crossed my mind, but after 2 years of hardcore crushing, and more ‘Am I gay?’ quizzes than I could count, I finally decided that I needed to get my act together, and ask out the pretty girl I was best friends with. And so I did. The look on Juleka’s face when I did ask her out, was something only identifiable as ‘Pure joy’. I never regretted it; people said I would, but I didn't. I was happy, and that was all that mattered. And even if I have to help Juleka search for her keys every morning for the rest of my life, I would still be just as happy and in love with her as I am right now.” As Rose finished, small tears were falling from her eyes.

“Do you, Juleka Couffaine, take Rose Lavillant to be your lawfully wedded wife, for poorer and for richer, in sickness and in health, to have and to hold, as long as you both shall live?”

“I do.”

“Do you, Rose Lavillant continue to take Juleka Couffaine as your lawfully wedded wife, for poorer and for richer, in sickness and in health, to have and to hold, as long as you both shall live?”

“I do.”

“Then-

“- by the power vested in me by the country of France, I pronounce you Wife and Wife. You may now kiss your bride.”

As Juleka leaned in to kiss Rose, she knew that as long as they were together, it would always be them against the world, and as far as Juleka was concerned, the world could suck it.



How To Unlock Courage



By *sternschauer-detektiv*

Freshly sewn clothes, ...



Accessories,
lots of jewelry, ...



And an already styled
and made up model.

It's all for
the day of Marinette's
first fashion show.

As it's her first time of
presenting her collection to
the world,
it's the first time that I will
present something on the
Catwalk.

The first time I'll be in the
spotlight.

Seen by everybody
and
with no opportunity to hide.



I always dreamed of becoming
a model.
But to be honest?

I am scared.

What if I slip and fall?
The photographers for sure won't
have mercy.

What if I get tangled in my
accessories and break them
before the show even
started?

And what if I lose my hat?



I'm not allowed to make any mistakes.
I mustn't disappoint Marinette!

But I'm so nervous!
I shouldn't have accepted
Marinette's request.

I, for sure, will fail!
It's better to surrender now
before it's too late.

Juleka! ♥

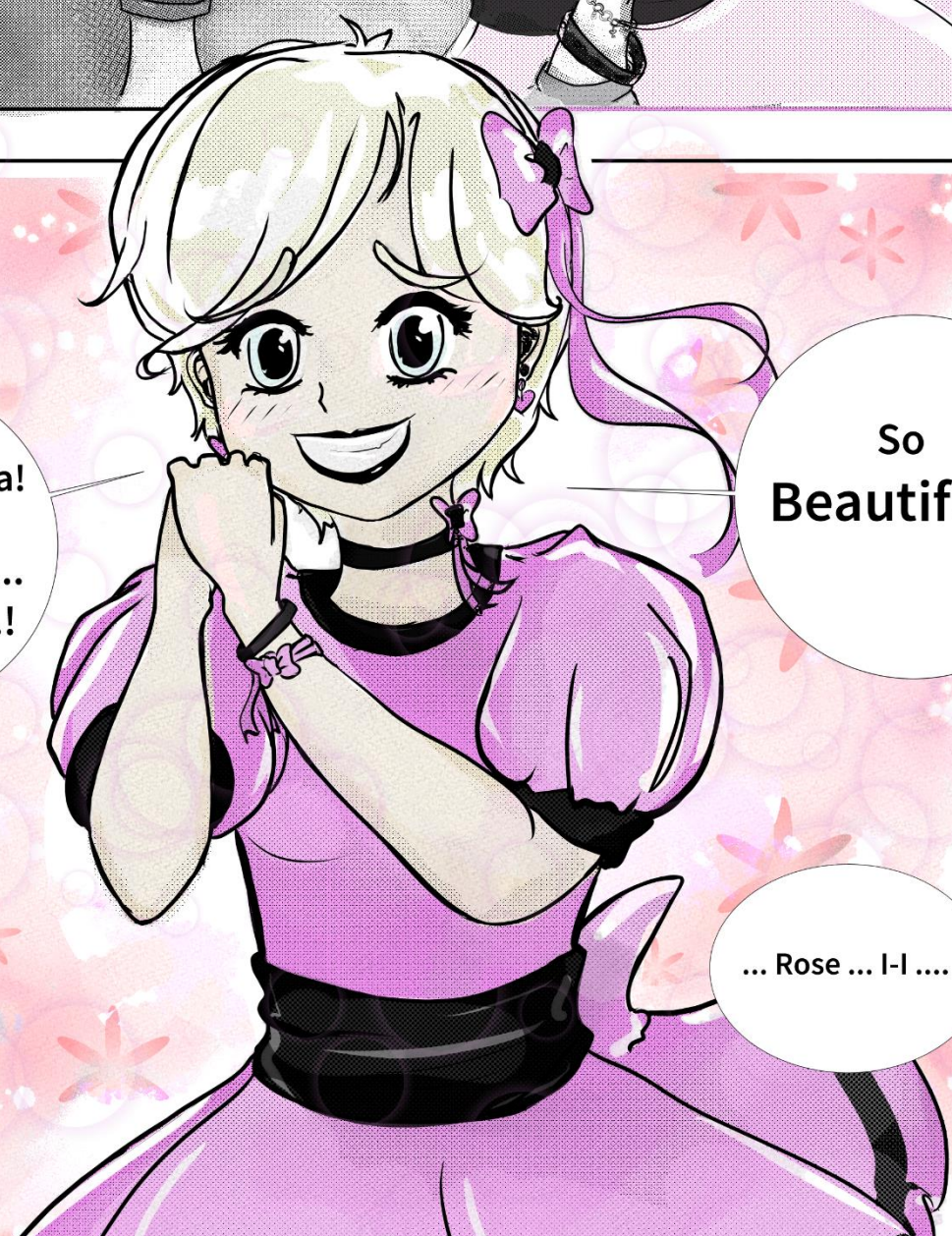


**Finally!
Here you are!**

**Let me have
a look!**

**Come on!
Just tell her before it is too late!**

**That's my chance
to tell them I can't do it.**

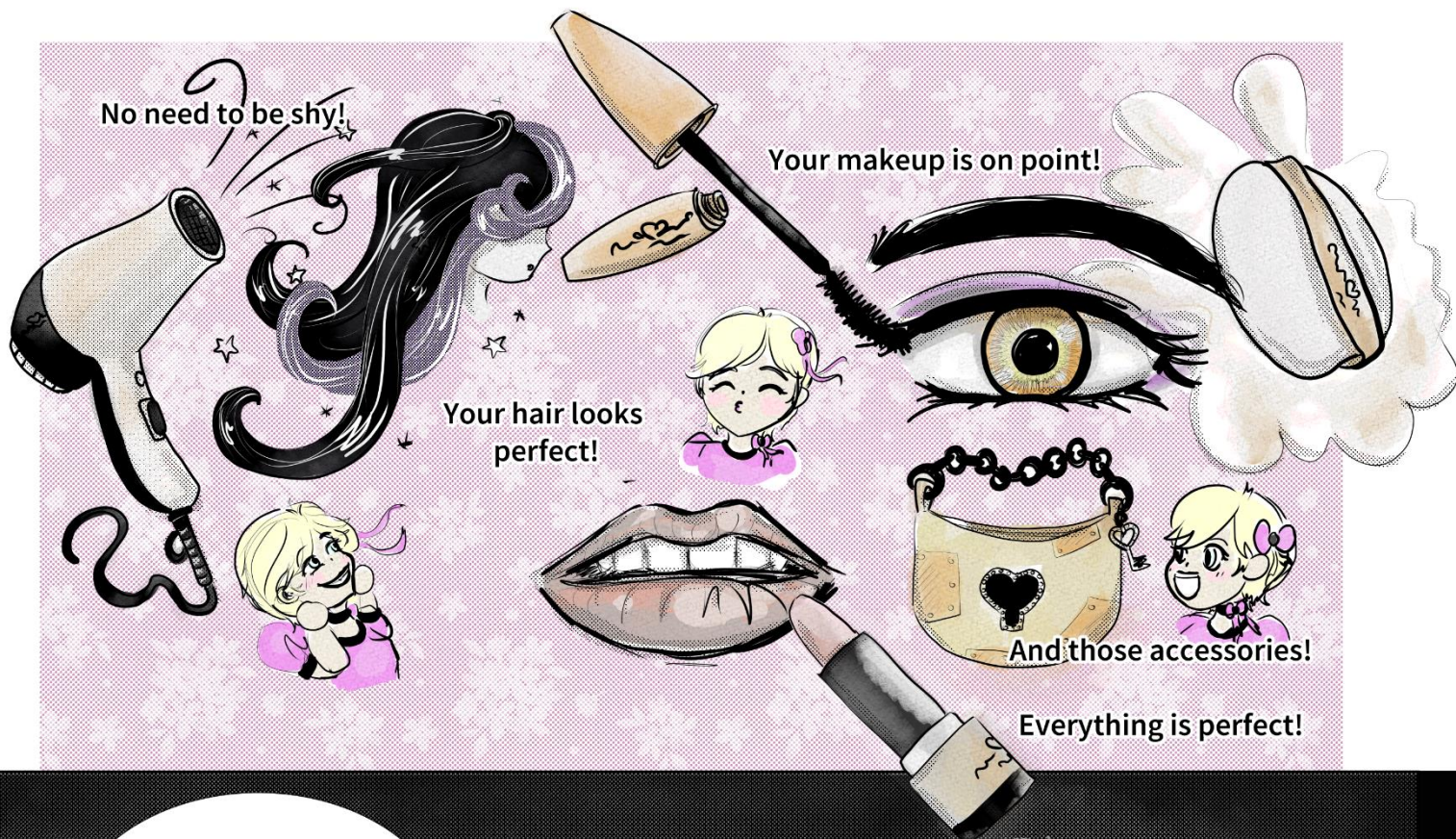


Oh my! Juleka!

**You look so ...
SOOOOO!**

**So
Beautiful!**

... Rose ... I-I



Exept the look
on your face.





Oh, Juleka ...

I know for sure
that you are
the only one
who can do this!



Those clothes are designed
and custom-made
just for you!

Don't you remember how
happy Marinette was when
you agreed to be her model?

And everybody did their best
to do the impossible and make
you look even prettier!

You are everyone's first choice!

You all made
the wrong choice!

I-I can't do it!

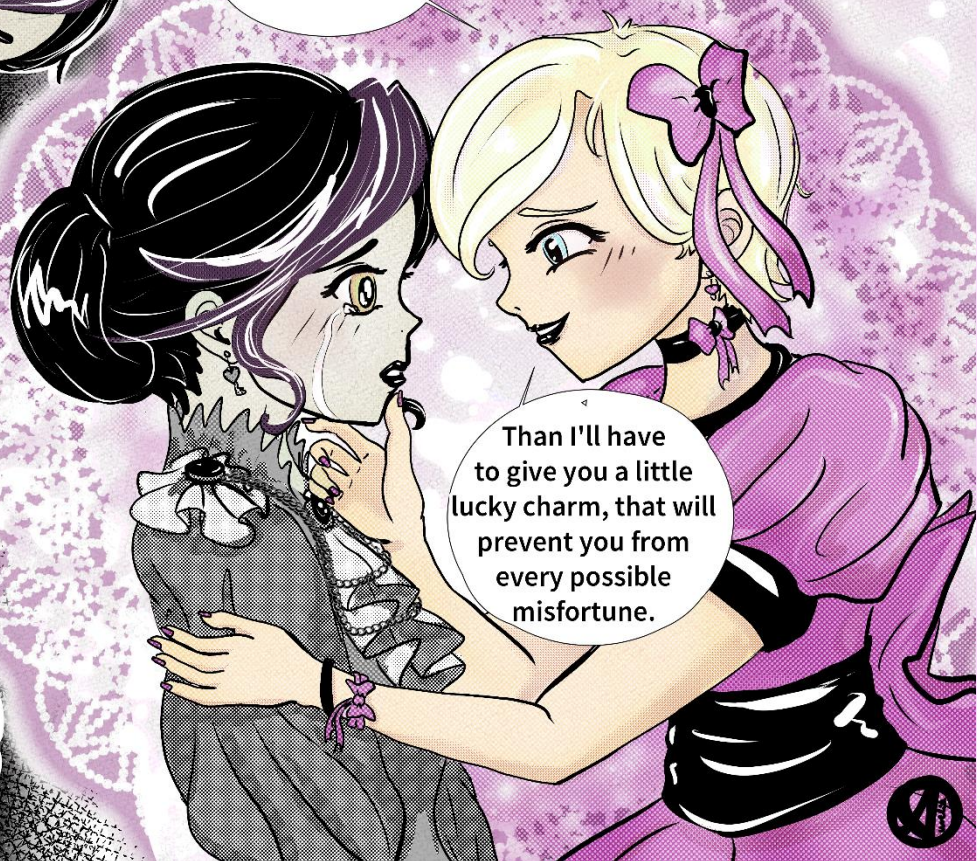
I will slip.

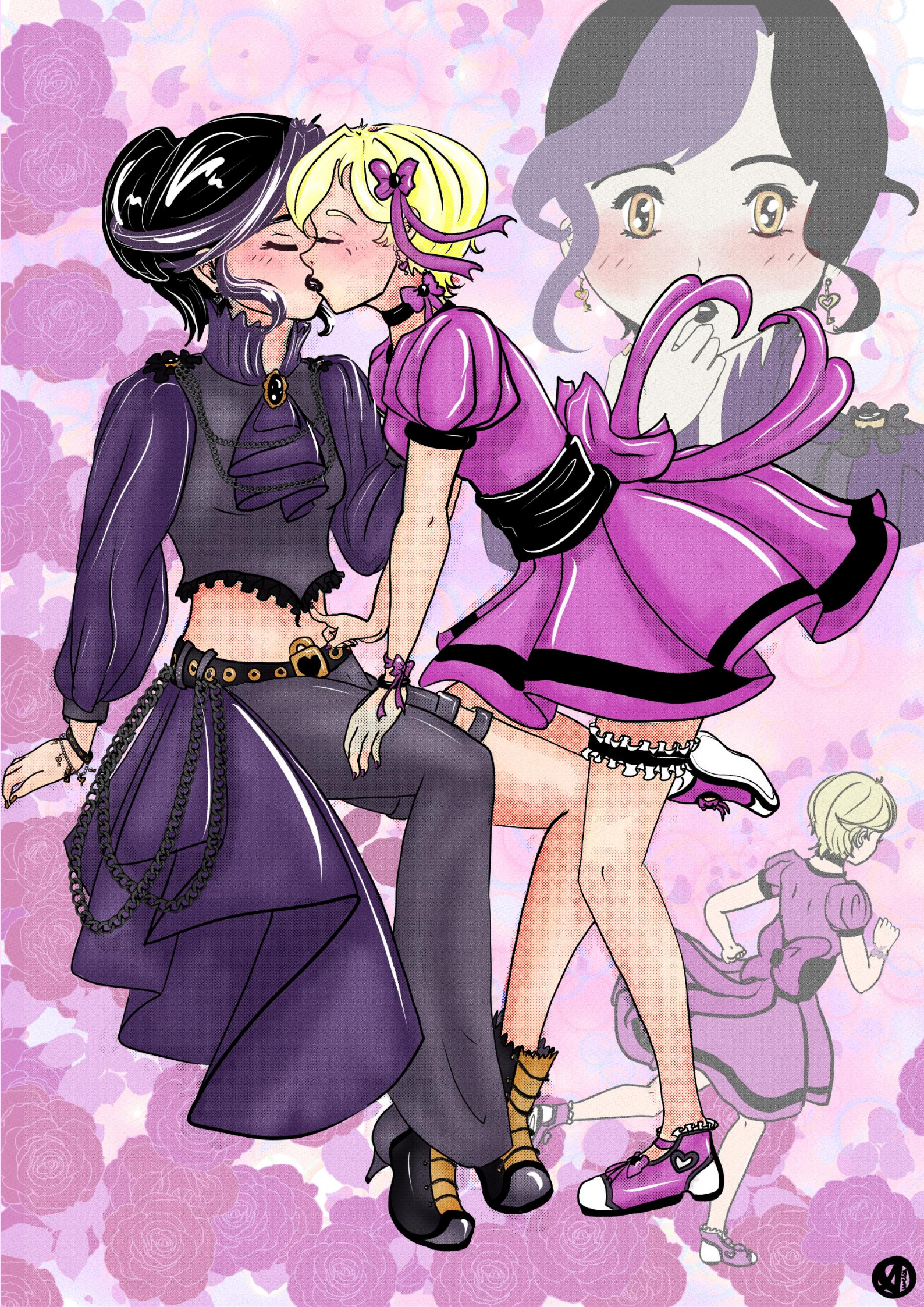
I will fall.

I will ruin
everything!

Alright.

Than I'll have
to give you a little
lucky charm, that will
prevent you from
every possible
misfortune.







Oh my - !
Juleka!

No need to say, after I
recieved such a mighty
lucky charm, but:

The show was a great success!

And all thanks to ...

I need to take
a photo and put it
over my bed!

Every magazine wrote about
Marinette's collection
as well as about me, the
"rising star of the model world".

Everybody look!
That's MY girlfriend!
NO!
My WIFE!
Juleka, please, you have
to marry me!

My beloved wife, Rose.

Miseria

by: JuliaFC

Language Betas: Khanofallorcs, Mystic_Raven20

Concept Beta: EtoileLeadSama

Juleka woke up with a massive gasp, jerking to a sitting position, her whole body covered in sweat. She looked at the dark emptiness in front of her and blinked a couple of times, trying to calm down the erratic beating of her heart. With the memories of her latest nightmare still fresh in her mind, she stood from her bed and walked out of her room, heading to the deck of the Liberty to get a breath of fresh air.

She opened the door and walked on the deck, a deep sigh escaping her as the chilly wind of the night made contact with her skin. She walked to the lifeline and leaned her elbows against it, spending some time admiring the city lights flickering in the dim light of sunrise. She watched in a daze the quiet waves of the river, slapping the multicoloured hull underneath her, letting herself get lulled by the soft rolling of the boat and by the dull splish-splash sound of the water.

Everything was so quiet on the Liberty in the early hours of the morning, a jarring contrast with the tension in her nerves.

Again! She had dreamed about it again. Two days ago she had received the phone call she had never wanted to receive, and since then, her senses had been on high alert.

"Prince Ali rang me a few minutes ago, Jule," Rose had squealed on the other side of the phone. "He said that he's coming back to Paris in two days and he wants to meet me!"

Juleka tried to focus on the ripples on the surface of the water underneath her and control her breathing. Maybe she was seeing too much into it. Maybe Luka was right and her anxiety was only playing tricks on her and making her see everything darkly when there was no need.

Jukeka knew that Rose had strong feelings towards her. But she also knew that Rose had always admired the young Prince. It was no secret that she had been akumatized once because of this. As much as she minimised it, she had a real celebrity crush on him, and would read any article that spoke about him, collect any photos she could find, and keep them in a little box scented with her favourite fragrance. Most of the admiration that Rose had for him, by Rose's own admission, was due to the amount of charity work that the Prince did, and how much he supported children's hospitals. Having been an ill child herself, Rose really valued the young royal's efforts.

But things hadn't stopped at a simple celebrity crush. After she had been akumatized and she and the Prince had spent some time together, Ali had asked Rose for her number so that he could keep in touch. The two had started a regular and prolific correspondence; while initially they only spoke about the work the Prince did, slowly, they started to discuss other topics, always more personal, until he became almost a second confidant in Rose's life. It had come to the point that he was also cheering her up, sometimes even quicker than Juleka herself could, if Rose felt sick and had to go to the hospital.

In a way, Juleka knew she should be happy. Rose didn't have to rely only on her; she had someone else who could show her support. But the brunette couldn't help the horrible feeling in her gut each time Rose spoke about the Prince.

Juleka loved Rose more than her own life, but she knew that all she could ever give Rose was her love and support. If Rose had gotten more sick, Juleka could only have watched her deteriorating. And pray. Every time she thought about it, anxiety was shaking her gut in a painful pang, guilt was eating up at her for not being good enough to support the girl she loved. But there was something else too, another feeling that crept into her at the mere thought of Prince Ali.

Jealousy.

Ali was not only handsome, but also rich and powerful. He could give Rose the best that medicine could offer. He could help her get back to health much more easily than Juleka. When she thought about it, her first instinct was to wrap her arms around her girlfriend and hold her tight. Proclaim her as hers and shoo away anyone who would dare come between them. But at the same time, she knew it was selfish. She knew it wasn't in Rose's best interest. She knew that, unfortunately, her love wasn't going to cure her.

And yet, every time that she was caught in this spiral of negativity, Rose had reassured her. Her positivity, her warmth, her cheerfulness, her ability to see good in anything and everyone. That was what made Rose so precious and that was what Juleka loved so much about her. Her ability to cheer up the very person that was trying to cheer *her* up. The way she forgot about her own pain, just to listen to the pain and worries of others. If Rose hadn't been in the world, the world would've lost one of its most precious stars.

She dried the wet corners of her eyes from the tears that stung them and sighed, her hands running to her arms to rub them, trying to produce warmth. As much as she liked the peacefulness of the deck in the early morning, there was still a chill in the wind.

As she moved to return inside, she felt a jacket being thrown over her shoulders. She looked behind her, knowing whose smile would cross her gaze.

"Luka, why are you up? You worked late last night," she muttered.

His smile never left his lips. "It's tomorrow, isn't it?"

Juleka broke eye contact with her twin and lowered her gaze to look again at the ripples on the calm surface of the water underneath. "Well, today, since it's nearly dawn."

"It'll be okay; you'll see." Luka picked up one of the hairpins that had come a little loose and allowed the purple stripe of her fringe to cover her eye. He affectionately moved her fringe

backwards and replaced the hairpin, dropping a soft kiss on the side of her head. "Trust Rose and her feelings for you. No Prince Charming is better than my little sister."

At his words, Juleka cocked her head to give him a sidelong look. "I'm only ten minutes younger than you, *Monsieur*."

"Exactly. A *whole* ten minutes younger." He gave her a pat on the head and that brought a little chuckle out of Juleka. "That's the right attitude. Here," he said, rummaging in his jeans' pocket to take out a small pendant representing a snake, which he put around her neck. "I was going to give it to you for our birthday, but I think you need it more now. It's a symbol of healing and rebirth."

"Thank you, Luka." She looked at it in a daze for a moment and then wrapped her brother up in a tight hug. "You're the best!"

He smiled softly when she broke the hug and stood next to her, leaning his elbows against the lifeline. "Don't worry about it."

Juleka stared at the goosebumps forming on her brother's naked forearms, which his light t-shirt didn't cover, and started walking back inside. "I'm chilly even with your jacket on. Let's get back inside, maybe we can sleep some before the alarm goes off."

But sleep didn't come. Juleka laid down in bed with her eyes wide open, staring intently at the necklace Luka had just given her. Eventually, her clock signalled 7 am and she had to get up—there was no use wasting time in bed; better to get ready for school early.

She reached Collège Françoise Dupont and walked into the hallway, sighing at the big stage that had been put up for Prince Ali's visit. Way to raise her anxiety levels with a visual reminder!

Rose was soon there, her excitement getting more infectious as time passed by.

"I can't believe he's coming to our Collège, and he wants to talk to me personally," she said, cupping a hand on a very rosy cheek. "He told me he got in contact with Dr Monique Fontaine, the one who did all the research around my illness. I wonder if it's about that..."

Juleka's heart sank at those words. She shot Rose a cringing smile and looked down at her tablet, pretending to get ready for the lesson. "Yeah, that would be grand."

Rose lifted an eyebrow at her reaction, and Juleka cringed some more—to Rose, she was an open book. "What's wrong?" she asked.

Juleka rubbed the nape of her neck and kept quiet, being grateful for the fact that Mlle Bustier had just arrived and everyone's attention was switching to her.

Rose's gaze was still burning a hole at the side of her head. "What's wrong, Jule?" she whispered.

"Nothing, I'm good," muttered Juleka in such a low whisper that she was seriously surprised by the frown that furrowed Rose's brows. She certainly had good hearing.

But the teacher started calling their names for roll call and Rose had to start paying attention.

The lesson flew by, as Juleka tried her best to divert her gaze from Rose's and change the subject each time Rose addressed the issue. Soon, the bell for the end of the morning lessons rang and everybody started gathering their stuff; it was Wednesday and the lessons were finished for the day. But also, it was time to take their seats in front of the stage.

Only Juleka's heart felt heavy, the girl doing her best not to show it. She stood, looking down, and collected her belongings in silence. "See you at the stage," she muttered to Rose without looking at her, and literally bolted out of her desk to exit the classroom. She tried to take a seat

at the very back, but Rose stopped at the beginning of the row of seats she had taken and stayed there staring at her, until Juleka sighed and stood up to follow her to the front row.

"I don't understand, Jule. What's going on?"

"Nothing," she managed to drag out of her clenched throat. The place became noisier and noisier, all the students taking their seats excitedly. Soon enough, the whole school was sitting down and the spotlights turned on to illuminate the place better. People fell quiet and, taking advantage of the sudden silence, M. Damoclès walked onto the stage and grabbed the microphone.

"Thank you for staying," he started. "It's a great pleasure for our Collège to receive the visit of Prince Ali of Achu. Prince Ali is well known for his charity work and, today, he's come as part of a tour to advertise the newest hospital he's just inaugurated in his hometown. I'm honoured to welcome you on stage, Prince Ali." Damoclès stretched his arm to introduce the young visitor.

Ali walked onto the stage and looked around, waving hello to the few students that squealed, and bowing his head to thank all those that clapped their hands.

"Thank you. It is my pleasure to come to your Collège to talk about the work I have been doing in Achu." Juleka noticed how the Prince's gaze scanned the public, and when he crossed gaze with Rose, his face brightened and a smile stretched his lips. "It is a new children's hospital that specialises in taking care of critically ill patients, affected with illnesses such as leukaemia, various heart conditions, and fibromyalgia. Let me introduce you all to the *Rose Lavillant* Children's Hospital in Achu."

When Rose heard Ali say her name, her eyes grew wide and Juleka heard her sucking her breath in. Juleka herself was surprised by the gesture of the young Prince. Principal Damoclès turned on the school's projector and the Prince's assistant started showing the slideshow

displaying pictures of a beautiful, super-modern hospital. She took over the presentation, allowing the Prince to step back.

Juleka felt a painful pang take hold of her heart, like a vice grip squeezing it tightly. The hospital looked amazing, the slideshow showed the names of many famous doctors who had been hired to provide specialism there, one of whom was the very Monique Fontaine whom Rose was talking about earlier.

Terrible. As she stared at the bright blush dusting Rose's cheeks and the bridge of her nose, at how her hands had cupped over her mouth and her blue eyes had opened wide, Juleka felt *terrible*.

Suddenly, Rose gasped and grabbed her phone. She looked at the incoming message and showed it to Juleka. It was Prince Ali.

Ali: [Can I talk to you for a minute in the back, Mlle Rose?]

Rose glanced at Juleka, a frown furrowing her brows as she put a hand on Juleka's forearm and asked her, "Are you alright, Jule?"

Juleka felt the vice in her throat tighten its hold. Was she asking her for permission? "Go," she told her.

Rose's smile was like a gift. "I'll be right back."

Juleka nodded, but as she watched Rose walk away, her anxiety soared. What was going to happen? Curious and a little jealous, she stood up, trying to keep an inconspicuous profile, and followed Rose, hiding in the shadows a few steps behind where she was talking to the Prince.

"It's good to see you, Prince Ali," Rose said, looking at him with a dazed expression. Juleka didn't blame her—it's hard not to feel dumbfounded when a Prince names a hospital in your honour.

Ali grabbed her hand, his gaze completely captured by hers. "It is nice to see you too. I always look forward to the conversations we have been having in the last few months. They are the best part of my day or week. When you spoke to me about why you loved my charity work so much and about your condition, I grew to admire you immensely. I feel so privileged to have met you, Mlle Rose."

Rose's eyes widened some more.

"I could not believe that such a pure soul as you existed in this world. The way you fight your illness and your pain, the way you always have a smile and a happy word for everyone inspired me. This is why I built this new hospital, and why I had the audacity to name it in your honour."

Rose lowered her gaze at the Prince's words. "I don't know what to say. This is the most beautiful thing anyone has ever done for me!"

The Prince's hold on Rose's hand grew stronger. "I have hired some of the most prestigious doctors, and have paid special attention to securing the services of Dr Fontaine because I know you would like to talk to her. I...wanted to ask you to come to Achu with me and help me in my charity mission."

"Me?" Rose gasped. "Oh, Gosh, I'm flattered Prince Ali, I can certainly organise for a trip to Achu during the school break—" But the hold of the Prince's hands on hers strengthened.

"Not only for a school break. I would like you to stay in Achu permanently, of course after talking to your parents."

"Permanently?" Rose shot a look at the stage behind her, blindly looking for Juleka among the crowd, but she widened her eyes when she couldn't find her.

"Yes, permanently. As a friend or...maybe more. If you accept to be more than a friend, I will ask my mother and father for permission to date you and make it official, but you do not have to. I admire you more than anybody else in the world, Mlle Rose. Every time we speak, my heart flutters and warmth fills my chest. I only want the best for you. Coming to live in Achu with me, not only would you finish your studies with the support of high calibre tutors, but you would be followed by the best specialists in the field, who could help you regain full health."

Juleka's heart sank. Tears filled her vision as she saw Rose tear her gaze again from the Prince's adoring one and scan her surroundings, ultimately finding Juleka and locking gazes with her.

There, in a nutshell, in the warm-hearted and caring words of the handsome Prince, was Juleka's worst nightmare. Guilt started eating at her as a frown furrowed Rose's brows. Because Juleka's anxiety had soared even more; she wanted Rose to say no with all her heart, to tell the Prince that she would stay in Paris. But her mind told Juleka that it wasn't fair, primarily on Rose, to take away from her the one chance she had to receive care and specialised medical support.

What had she read in a book, once, that had made Rose cry on her shoulder? Something about loving a person meant knowing when to let them go? Was *that* what love was about? Then why did her heart feel as if it were being ripped into pieces at the very thought? Why was her soul screaming in her ears to hug Rose silly and tell her not to leave her, ever? Why did her entire essence want to put herself between the Prince and Rose and tell him to leave her girlfriend alone?

Was she so selfish, wanting Rose to hang on to her, while she could lead a much happier life in Achu? What could she provide Rose with, compared with Prince Ali? Love, hopes and dreams? She was only a normal girl living on a boat! Sure, since Jagged had finally admitted that he was her and Luka's father, he had started helping their mother out a little, in subtle ways, because

Anarka was too proud to 'accept his charity', as she had put it. Luka had played on a tour with Jagged recently, and Kitty Section was starting to get some recognition. But that was *nothing* compared to what Prince Ali could add to the equation.

Who was Juleka to jeopardise Rose's chance to see world-renowned specialists and keep her illness under control? Her terrified gaze crossed Rose's worried one and Juleka found herself nodding. She plastered a small smile on her lips and at Rose's flash of eyebrows, she nodded more decisively. But she could still see the doubt in Rose's blue eyes, and the vice gripping her heart grew more painful.

She waited for Rose to turn her head and look at the Prince again. She waited for Rose to open her mouth and start talking, but she couldn't hear what Rose was saying. It was as if the mad beating of her heart had made her deaf and the erratic rhythm of her breathing was causing her to get dizzy.

She started hugging her own arms and rocking back and forth, her eyes wide open and her heart in her throat. A gush of acid filled her mouth—she needed to throw up. Trying to make herself inconspicuous, she crouched over herself to hide in the shadows, keeping her steps quiet to prevent Rose from seeing her flee. She kept a low profile until she was near the exit, and then her legs picked up pace until she bumped into someone. When she raised her watery eyes, wide open and looking up like a hiding prey caught by its predator, she met the stunned gaze of Adrien.

"Sorry," she muttered and ducked past the model, finally letting her legs pick up pace and hiding her face behind her hands.

She didn't see Adrien turn around to look at her with a frown and she didn't hear Rose cry, "Juleka, no!" and to the Prince, "Sorry, I have to go!" from the back of the stage.

The girls' washroom was again her shelter as deep sobs shook her frame. What kind of girlfriend was she? What kind of *friend*? Why was it so difficult for her to be happy for Rose, to

be supportive and accept her choice? She wanted Rose to be happy and healthy, but there was also a selfish part of her, a part buried down inside her gut, a part of her that viscerally wished for Rose and her to never be separated. She *needed* Rose, she needed her positivity, her cheerfulness, her warmth. Her support.

Her phone buzzed and Juleka checked her messages.

Rose: [Where are you?]

Juleka's eyes narrowed. She thought of telling her where she was, wanting nothing more than to be wrapped in Rose's embrace and forget about her sense of guilt. But she knew that it wasn't fair. Rose needed *Juleka's* support now. Rose, who probably had run after her, and whom Adrien must've told that he bumped into Juleka a moment before, and where she had disappeared to. Rose, who had probably just come into the girls' washroom, because the noise of the door bursting open was loud and clear.

"Juleka! Juleka, are you here?"

Yes, she had guessed right.

"Go with him!" she muttered in between sobs.

"Juleka, come out! Please listen to me! I won't go, I will stay with you!"

"I said go with him! Don't make it more difficult than it needs to be..." she muttered louder, a surge of guilt and anxiety filling her chest as her worries became reality. Rose didn't want to go. She was ready to jeopardise her health to stay with Juleka. She should be delighted, but...nope. She didn't even know what she wanted herself. She felt as if a whole pile of crap had just fallen on top of her head, as the guilt gnawed at her.

And that's when she saw it. The purple butterfly, flapping its wings towards her from the top of the door of the stall.

"Juleka! JULEKA, NO! No, don't let it hit you! Don't listen to that monster!" Rose's desperate banging on the toilet's door became more erratic and anxious, but Juleka was too gone to worry about it. "Please, Juleka, don't do it!" screamed Rose, but it was too late. The butterfly hit the snake pendant around Juleka's neck and the ethereal mask of *Papillombre* appeared on her face.

"How nice to hear from you again, Mlle Couffaine. I'm *Papillombre*. This time, I can feel a much stronger sense of despair coming from you."

Juleka's eyes narrowed. "Go away, *Papillombre*. I'm not going to fall for your treacherous words again. I only want Rose to be happy and have a chance to get healthy." In the distance, Juleka could hear Rose's voice cheering her on and telling her to resist. Yes, she would try, for Rose!

"How very foolish of you trying to refuse my power, my dear girl. I feel that you're hurting. It's noble of you, wanting your girlfriend to be happy and healthy, but where does that leave *you*? Who is going to take care of your broken heart, when she will be gone? You just faced your worst nightmare and it has left you shaken and terrified. *Empty. Alone.*"

Juleka fisted her hands to the sides of her head and closed her eyes shut. "SHUT UP! I don't want to listen to you!"

"And waste this opportunity? Do you realise how much power you would gain if you were able to extract the hurt and desperation from people? You could use that power to heal your girlfriend! She's always the one to cheer up everyone, to look after everyone. But who looks after her?"

As *Papillombre* carried on in his speech, Juleka's resolve started to falter. He was right. Rose had used her positive energy to help everybody else. Now, Juleka would use *Papillombre's*

power to give Rose back her full health. So Rose would be able to stay with her and Juleka wouldn't feel guilty anymore.

"*Miseria*, I give you the power to show people their worst regrets, and feed on their anguish to heal. In return, you will give me the Miraculous of Ladybug and Chat Noir. Do we have an agreement?"

An empty expression appeared on Juleka's red face. "Yes, *Papillombre*."

As *Papillombre*'s magic wrapped around Juleka, Rose's cry echoed in the silence. But it was too late; Rose could only watch as a gigantic translucent cobra took Juleka's place.

Rose's face lost all colours as the blonde started moving backwards. "Juleka..."

"I'm not Juleka anymore," hissed the cobra, flicking its forked tongue out. "I'm *Missssseria*. Get out of the way, Rossssse. I don't want to hurt you!"

Rose was a little too white in the face as she looked around and bolted out the door. When she reached the school hall where all the students were still sitting in front of the stage, she burst through the door and stopped a moment to catch her breath, the eyes of everyone darting to her. "Akuma," she said between heavy pants. "Take shelter!"

Panic ran loose. Everyone darted around like headless chickens, while Ali looked confused; M. Damoclès and a couple of teachers tried to calm the spirits down, but failed miserably.

"Rose, hide with us!" Kim said, but Rose took her hand away from the one Kim was stretching out.

"No! I've got something to do first." She stayed behind, standing resolutely in the middle of the hall and looking at the sky, until she heard the zipping of a cord and saw Ladybug landing in front of her, while Chat Noir grabbed her bridal style and jumped out, immediately followed by

his Lady. When they reached a nearby rooftop and Chat Noir put her down, she crossed two sets of worried eyes.

"Why were you standing there, Rose? It's dangerous, an akuma is on the loose!" Ladybug said.

Rose sighed, her gaze dropping. "It's Juleka. Please, Ladybug, she got akumatised because of me. I want to help! Can I have my Miraculous back?"

Ladybug crossed gaze with Chat Noir and both heroes nodded, the heroine opening her yoyo.

"Rose Lavillant, this is the Miraculous of the Pig, which gives the power of Jubilation. You will use it for the greater good," said Ladybug, her hand dipping inside her yoyo to produce the anklet.

Soon, Pigella joined forces with Ladybug and Chat Noir and the scene that unfolded in front of their eyes was terrifying. The gigantic cobra hit people with its spit, which turned into a sort of glue-like translucent liquid that wrapped around the victim like a cocoon and forced them to their knees, with some rocking back and forth, some cupping their hands over their eyes; all of them screamed in what felt like deep anguish. The more its victims screamed, the bigger the Cobra became, little by little.

Even Prince Ali was wrapped into one of these transparent 'cocoons'; he was crying for not having been able to help his sister. Rose's heart broke; she had read about that incident, it was the reason why Prince Ali had become so keen on providing medical help to children and supporting charities. His little sister had caught an incurable disease and had died in great pain, even though his family had done everything possible to save her. Seeing the young man's body shaken by deep sobs and hearing how desperately he called out for his little sister was something Rose wasn't going to forget any time soon. It gave her a huge sense of sadness; she shook her head trying to clear her thoughts. She hadn't even been hit yet, she needed to stay positive!

Everything happened very quickly: Rose was still looking in horror at Ali crying his eyes out, when she heard a quiet hiss and she turned her head to the right to see Juleka—*Miseria*—charge at Ladybug and Chat Noir.

"Watch out!" she screamed, and obviously the cat jumped in to protect his Lady but, to Rose's surprise, Ladybug gave him a firm push and made him jerk to the side, managing to protect herself using her yoyo as a shield.

"Why, Milady? It's my job to protect you!" complained Chat Noir, jumping away to avoid another hit and using his baton as a shield to protect himself.

"You can't—" started Ladybug, tears in her eyes, her voice muffled. She jerked away to avoid another hit of *Miseria* and then continued, after glaring at him. "I can't allow you to get hit, *Chaton*." She shuddered. "I can't risk *Papillombre* releasing the akuma to hit you instead."

"Come on, be realistic!" snapped back Chat Noir. "We can't be akumatised, we're going to be okay."

She stopped to glare at him. "I don't know what gave you the impression that we can't be akumatised, Chat Noir. We can, and we will, if we're not careful. We can't afford it!"

They both bounced up to the nearest rooftop trying to avoid getting hit. When Pigella saw that *Miseria* was trying to follow them, she decided to intervene. "Juleka! Please, you can fight that monster. This isn't you!" she shouted.

"What iffff I don't want to ffffffight him?" hissed the snake. "If I hit Ladybug and Chat Noir, I'll get enough power to cure Rosssse. Who are you to sssstop me from helping her?"

Pigella's eyes widened as tears wormed their way out of them. She had to hide away on a nearby rooftop to regain composure. Bless Juleka's golden heart! But even though she had good intentions, Pigella knew that this wasn't the right way to achieve them. Ladybug reappeared

again with a red and black polka dotted book of Greek and Roman legends in her hands; Pigella's gaze narrowed—she was even more determined to help the heroes.

Miseria was getting bigger and Ladybug didn't seem to have found how to use her Lucky Charm. When Pigella saw the tail of the snake attacking Ladybug from behind while both heroes were concentrating on fighting the snake on the front, she didn't have the time to shout. The snake's tail wrapped around Ladybug, stopping her in her tracks and allowing the magic poison to hit her. Chat Noir's screams and desperate attempts to free Ladybug weren't helping, as he allowed himself to get carried away by his anger and frustration and attacked Miseria blindly.

Ladybug was screaming. Screaming about some Chat Blanc that was destroying the world, and telling him that she was sorry. That she wanted to save him. That he was still Chat Noir to her. All that was visibly distracting Chat Noir, who nearly got hit three times before landing on the same rooftop where Pigella was observing the scene. He hid behind a chimney and sank his face against the wall, hitting the surface with raw and firm punches.

Pigella kept looking at Miseria, and at Chat Noir, and at all the victims that were screaming in anguish, including Ladybug. The snake grew larger the more people screamed. And the worst thing was that even if Chat Noir hadn't been hit, he seemed to be very affected by what Ladybug's screams were revealing, and almost unable to function.

Pigella watched as the black-clad boy held Ladybug's Lucky Charm in his shaky fist and hit the wall randomly with his other fist, groaning as Ladybug let out yet another scream.

"What's going on?" Pigella asked him.

"Ladybug didn't have the time to understand how to use the Lucky Charm. I don't know what to do...Miseria seems to be getting bigger. I think she feeds on people's despair."

"I could use my power against the akuma," Pigella said. "Maybe it would stop her!"

Chat Noir's eyes opened wide as he gasped as if he remembered something very important. He looked at Pigella, and then he looked at the Lucky Charm in his hand, and finally at Ladybug still screaming underneath them. "Of course! Your power is Gift, isn't it?"

Pigella nodded, a little unsure of where Chat Noir was heading. "I can try to use it on Mise—"

"Not on Miseria," Chat Noir interrupted her. He grabbed a good hold of the Lucky Charm and started scanning its pages until he found what he was looking for. "There. I'll distract Miseria. You get close to Ladybug and use 'Gift' on her. Miseria shows people their worst regret and feeds on the desperation of its victims, but if someone manages to overcome their despair, it shrinks back to its normal size and loses its power."

They turned to Ladybug, who was now crying, all wrapped into herself. Pigella looked at the boy and saw how pale he was under that black mask. "Are you alright, Chat Noir? You look..."

"I'm fine," he said, interrupting her, his voice cracking as if his throat was clenched by an invisible vice. "Don't know how long I can bear to hear her screaming, though."

Pigella put a hand on his shoulder. "Whatever that is, she must be fearing it a lot. I think you need to talk to her, when you get a chance." She was surprised when the usually cheerful Chat Noir muffled a sob and a couple of tears rolled out of his eyes and down his cheeks.

"That is a *regret*, not a fear, so...it means *it happened*. Why hasn't she told me about it?" He banged his fist against the chimney as Ladybug screamed his name again, asking him where his akuma was. "I don't even remember! Swear to God, I should remember something. *Anything...*"

When the boy gave Pigella a look full of pain, the girl could only wrap him into a hug. He stiffened at her touch, but she knew she had to. "Let's go and help her now. You two can talk later."

He gave her a nod and used his baton to propel himself back in the yard. "Hey, *Monty Python*, aren't you supposed to make people laugh?"

Pigella waited for a moment on the rooftop, until a very annoyed Miseria started following Chat Noir around and she saw an opening to reach Ladybug. She jumped and crouched in front of the polka dotted superheroine, kissed and swung her tambourine to reveal a nicely wrapped gift, which she then threw at Ladybug. The packet burst open, shining in the low light of the hall and revealing in front of the heroine's desperate eyes a rose-tinted picture of her suited self (*Thank God for that*, thought Pigella), wrapped in the tight hug of all the kwamis and, to Pigella's big surprise, of both *Adrien* and Chat Noir, Adrien kissing her cheek and Chat Noir placing a lingering kiss on the knuckles of her hand, a smiling and approving Tibetan monk standing behind them.

Pigella's eyes widened at the image, and her heart tumbled when Ladybug sniffled and moved towards the picture a shaky hand, which was getting freed from the hold of the snake's poison. Her eyes filled with tears, and the pink-clad superheroine got worried that Ladybug was heading back to her previous depressed state and would strengthen the Snake. However, a glance at Juleka's akuma form told her a different story—the Snake was shrinking. Those were happy tears.

"Th-that's all I really want... Be a good Guardian...make Su-Han proud. The two boys I love getting along with each other. That they love me back. I don't want to break anybody's heart, I love them so much! Chat Noir...*Buttercup*..."

Oh my God, thought Pigella. She couldn't believe it, but there was only one person who had ever used a nickname like that to call the boy she loved and...it just made perfect sense now. Of course, Ladybug was *Marinette*!

"Wha—?" whispered Chat Noir. Pigella looked in the direction of the boy's voice, managing to tear her gaze from the rose tinted picture for a few moments. The feline had been thrown just

behind her by Miseria's hit and was now looking unusually red in the face after having seen the content of Ladybug's heart's desire. Clearly, he'd heard Ladybug's words too.

"*B-buttercup? Th-the boys she loves?*"

Yep, he'd heard indeed...he looked more than shocked. Dumbfounded, even, his gaze crossing Ladybug's for a long moment as the girl regained her senses. But Ladybug was quick to get back on her feet and to snap out of her depression. Pigella watched as her yoyo flew, snatched the pendant from the Snake's neck and pulled it to the heroine.

"Got it! Now, Chat Noir!" she shouted, throwing the necklace at her partner. He blinked before catching it with one hand.

"Cataclysm!"

As the necklace crumbled to ashes, Ladybug's yoyo caught the butterfly flapping its way out.

"Bye bye, little butterfly," whispered the polka dotted superheroine releasing the now white and purified insect. Then, she grabbed the Lucky Charm that was laying on the ground next to her, where it had been discarded during the fight, and threw it in the air. "Miraculous Ladybug!"

As the little ladybugs flew around fixing the damage caused by the akuma, Pigella hid behind a bench and released her transformation. She ran back out and hugged Juleka tightly.

"I'm so relieved you're back, Jule!" She smiled fondly at the black-haired girl, who smiled back.

"I'm sorry, Rose," she started, but Rose put a finger on her lips.

"Nothing to be sorry about. It's my fault, too, I should've realised you were anxious and addressed the issue before talking to Prince Ali."

As if she had summoned him, Ali's voice resounded just behind them. "Mlle Rose, are you okay?"

Rose smiled reassuringly at Juleka and stood up, patting her clothes clean before turning to look at the Prince. Because of the akuma attack, the place had been deserted and the few people who had been hit by Miseria's power were far away. Rose darted her gaze around and decided that the place was private enough. First of all, she walked to Ladybug and took hold of her hand, swiftly dropping the anklet bracelet on her palm and closing the hand with a gentle pat.

"Thank you for saving Juleka, Ladybug," she said.

Then, she walked to the Prince and cupped her hand to his cheek. "Also, thank you for your concern, Prince Ali, and for your generous offer. Thank you for hiring Dr Fontaine, and for naming your hospital after me, I'm so chuffed! But...sorry, I can't move to Achu. My life is here. I can, and I will, organise a trip during the school break, though!"

Ali grabbed her hand and squeezed it with his. "I am sorry to hear this, Mlle Rose. I genuinely love you and admire you. I thought you also loved me."

"I admire you too, my Prince," she started, looking at Juleka briefly before meeting gazes with Ali once more. "And I'm flattered about what you just said. For some time, before and after I met you, I thought I was in love with you too." She lowered her eyes. "But things have changed."

"What happened? I thought we were friends; that we were getting to know each other better."

She squeezed the hand of the Prince with hers as she crossed gazes with Ladybug, then with Chat Noir, a small smile lingering on her lips as she looked at Ali again. "We are good friends, and I must admit it, I do have a *celebrity* crush on you."

She paused for a moment. "However, as much as I love you for your public image and for the charity work that you do, as much as I collect every picture and every article about you that I find on the papers, I realised that *this isn't true love*. I admire you, Ali, but love is different. Love comes from the small little things, from the familiarity, from being there for the other, day in and day out. It comes from supporting each other, from keeping each other's secrets, from wanting only the best for the other. And not only. Love is also knowing the good, the bad, the beautiful and the ugly of the person you love, but still wanting to spend the rest of your life together." She glanced at Ladybug as she said so and noticed how the heroine's gaze was now focused on her partner. While he wasn't looking.

A lingering smile crossed Rose's lips as she looked at Ali again and continued, "Although we have kept in touch in the last few months and we have become much more familiar with each other, my Prince, I can't say that I have reached this level of trust with you, and I don't know if I ever will."

He sighed, cupping a hand to her cheek and stroking it gently with his thumb. "I understand," he said. "I think that, when I met you, I must have projected my little sister on you, somehow. She was like you, positive and cheerful. I think that maybe... I wanted you to take her place." He rubbed his thumb more gently under her eye to wipe a couple of tears that had run down her cheek.

"During the Akuma fight...I couldn't help hearing what you were saying. I'm so sorry for your sister, and I'm sure she's very proud of all the work you have done in her honour. Because of you, thousands of children will receive excellent therapy and many lives will be saved."

He smiled softly. "Thank you, Mlle Rose. I was hoping that you could help me in my mission and be at my side, but I understand why you did not accept. I am curious about something though: do you know a person like the one that you have described? Someone who has such a strong bond with you and whom you love and cherish as much as you said?"

"As a matter of fact," Rose said, "yes, I do. Her name is Juleka."

She looked towards Juleka as she said that, silently asking her to approach. Soon, Juleka stood next to her, a little embarrassed and flushed, but when Rose circled her waist with her hand, her smile was bright and confident. Olive-green met brown, Ali grinning in understanding as he bowed his head slightly at the brunette.

"It is good to know that she has your support," he said, addressing Juleka. "If you want, you are also invited to Achu when Mlle Rose will visit. It will be my pleasure to show you both around. What do you say, Mlle Juleka?"

Juleka nodded and looked down, smiling shyly.

As Rose reached up to wrap both in a tight hug, she reflected on how lucky she was to have so many people who loved her and wanted only the best for her. She had been blessed with wonderful friends; she had a future career as a singer for a pop group thanks to her wonderful girlfriend and her brother. She was able to support and help children who were going through the pain she had endured in her childhood, thanks to the Prince. And she had a chance to be a superhero, thanks to Ladybug.

She had been so lucky to have been given a chance at life after her illness, and she was grateful to have *them*, as they were the ones who made her life worth living.

Ladybug, Prince Ali, and obviously, the girl she loved. The one who gave her strength. The amazing Juleka Couffaine.





Bass

*by @thousand-page-dreams on tumblr
beta read by anonymous*

Like a bass guitar, Juleka existed in the background.

Before Rose, no one talked to her. Chloe ruled the classroom, and no one questioned their queen.

A purple strand of hair sheltered her left eye. No one noticed when she dyed it. Chloe didn't even insult her.

For the most part, the queen left Juleka alone. She should be grateful. But it just made her feel like a ghost.

On the rare moments her classmates spoke to her, Juleka mumbled an answer no one understood. It wasn't on purpose. But they didn't ask her to clarify, and just walked away.

In every class picture, someone blocked her. When they all graduated, would anyone remember who she was?

But then a miracle happened, and not the Ladybug kind.

Like sunlight after a thunderstorm, Rose transferred to their class. She picked Juleka to sit next to.

"I love your hair!" Rose said when they met.

For the first time, Juleka made a friend.

They were natural opposites, but it was like their personalities harmonized with each other. Juleka never put down Rose's celebrity crushes. They both listened to metal. Rose didn't let her hide from the world.

Like a vine, Rose linked her to other girls. Juleka wasn't friends with Marinette, Alya, Mylene, or Alix, but they were friendly to her now.

Though sometimes their conversations were rough. Marinette had asked her about what she'd like the class president to do. Juleka said get-to-know-you activities, but she mumbled nervously. Marinette just asked the next person.

Juleka played guitar, but she liked the menacing sighs of bass.

She and Rose were hanging out on her mom's boat. Juleka was teaching Rose how to play bass. When she pressed down on Rose's fingers, they were warm.

"You have really soft hands," Rose said.

Rose looped their fingers together and squeezed. Waves lapped at the boat like a kitten's tongue.

"Um yeah. Yours are really...smooth. Note sounds great."

Their hands were still together. Most of the girls Juleka liked were celebrities, people she'd never have to interact with.

But this wasn't a crush, they were just close friends.

"I wrote some song lyrics. Wanna hear them?" Rose asked.

Juleka nodded and tucked her guitar back in its case.

Rose laid her head on Juleka's shoulder. Blonde hair tickled her cheek. They needed to put more sunblock on, but Juleka didn't want to move.

They had talked with Luka about starting a band. The idea of performing in front of people was terrifying, but nobody cared about the bassist.

Rose played the recording on her phone. The lyrics were about candy, but Rose screamed the words. The odd combination somehow worked.

Some of their classmates thought Rose was immature, but she didn't have it easy. Chronically ill, she spent a lot of time in the hospital. She didn't like to talk about that. Only Juleka knew.

When picture day came, the other girls reassured Juleka that she'll break the curse. Perhaps today would be different.

Before the picture, Juleka went to the restroom. Something scraped across the floor, and a nasally voice whispered "sorry."

Sabrina, the queen's loyal henchwoman.

Juleka grabbed the handle of the stall, but it wouldn't judge. So Chloe knew she existed after all.

Why?

She was assigned to stand by Adrien in the photo, a boy who never said a word to her. Juleka was also gay. Yet Chloe was somehow jealous.

Miss Bustier would notice her absence, right? Juleka rarely spoke in class, but her grades were high.

And Rose. She'd never forget Juleka.

The minutes passed and no one came. Why had she ever thought she belonged? The other girls only tolerated her. Miss Bustier didn't care that her student was missing.

She blotted her tears with toilet paper.

Finally, the stall door opened.

"Poor, sweet Juleka," Rose said, eyes wide with sadness.

She'd come too late.

"I missed the photo, didn't I?"

"Another of Chloe's mean tricks," Rose said.

"No one ever hears me or sees me. I'm invisible. Even in photos," Juleka said.

Rose tried to reassure her.

How could she ever be a model? No one saw her, not even with bright purple streaks in her hair. She couldn't even be in a lousy school picture, let alone a magazine cover.

"Forget it. Forget me," Juleka said.

She ran outside and sat behind a bench. She curled her knees to her chin, to be as small as everyone treated her.

A dark butterfly caressed her wrist, like it was comforting her.

Juleka woke up with no idea what happened. She heard Ladybug speak, who sounded a bit like Marinette.

She must have been akumatized. Juleka wanted to be noticed, but not for being a monster.

Marinette told the entire class to meet in the park after school. The photographer took a bunch of pictures, all with Juleka at the center.

"You uh didn't have to do this," Juleka said.

"Of course, I did. No one deserves to be forgotten," Marinette said.

Perhaps they were friends too.

After the photoshoot, Juleka talked more to her classmates than ever before. She told Max she played bass and they discussed sound waves. Nath showed her his drawings. She asked Adrien for advice on modeling.

It's like a dream.

When everyone else left, Juleka and Rose sat on the lip of the fountain. Their knees touched. Juleka flicked the surface of the water.

"So like what did I do when I was akumatized?"

Rose's hand found hers.

"You made everyone look like you. You also had these awesome pigtails and pink hair," Rose said.

When her classmates were akumatized, they always seemed more real.

"Seems like a useless power."

Rose tucked her hair behind her ear. She stroked Juleka's cheek.

"There's no one else like you. You're extraordinary," Rose said.

Nothing in the world mattered except those big blue eyes.

She kissed Juleka. Her lips tasted like strawberry chapstick.

So this was what all the love songs meant.

A love song with heavy bass.





Wildcat & Wildflower

art and writing by @theriveroflight

beta read by Emmalylis

“Hey, wildflower.”

Rose smiles as Minouette approaches. “It’s been a few weeks, hasn’t it? Since the last time we saw each other?”

“I’ve been busy.” Minouette sighs. “And you have, too.”

Rose bites her lip. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you.”

“I, um, found out,” Minouette says, twirling a finger through her ponytail. “Don’t worry about it. I’m sure...I’m sure you weren’t thinking about me during your flare-up.”

Rose looks down. “You’re a friend of mine, Minouette. Just as much as my bandmates, or as the girls in the squad. I should’ve told you.”

“I get why you wouldn’t,” Minouette answers, shifting her hand to lean on her baton instead.

“You’ve been through a lot. I only found out because I asked why you weren’t home. Your friends were all really nice about it. Some people didn’t want to tell me at first. Our...friendship is kind of a secret.”

“I’m sorry for making you expose us,” Rose says, placing a hand on Minouette’s shoulder. She visibly relaxes at the gesture.

“No, I’m sorry for telling,” Minouette says, looking away from Rose’s hand. “It puts you in danger to be connected to me.”

“I’m not afraid of being akumatized, wildcat.” Rose smiles. “It’ll be okay, as long as you’re around to stop me.”

“I don’t know if I can always be there for you,” Minouette says, “but I’ll try.” With a determined look on her face, she takes Rose’s hand from where it’s placed on Minouette’s shoulder. “Until next time, wildflower.”

It starts after Rose’s akumatization. Apparently, the heroes have a habit of checking up on victims, and when Minouette knocks on Rose’s window, she opens it.

“You are Rose Lavillant, correct?” Minouette says, perching on the windowsill.

“Come in,” Rose says. “I know you aren’t going to hurt me.”

Rose has, maybe, just a little bit, had a crush on Minouette. Who could blame her? Minouette’s punk rock style and flair are super attractive, and Rose is a simple bisexual.

“We have a habit of checking on akuma victims afterwards. I usually talk to the akumatized person, while Ladybug talks to the people that were affected by the akuma’s power.”

“The people that got brainwashed today because of me,” Rose says, gripping her hand into a fist.



“The people that got brainwashed because of *Hawk Moth*,” Minouette corrects. “That’s one of the things we have to stress. That it’s never your fault that someone’s taking advantage of your emotions.”

It’s never her fault?

“It was a stupid crush,” Rose says. “I shouldn’t have gotten jealous.”

“I never said it was rational. Emotions generally aren’t.” Minouette comes down off the windowsill and steps towards Rose. “Everyone’s okay. You didn’t hurt anyone permanently. Everyone is going to be okay — including you.”

Rose sighs. “I...I believe you, Minouette.”

“You’re stronger than you think. Like a wildflower.” Minouette smiles. “Have a nice night, Rose.”

“I--uh, goodnight, Minouette.”

Minouette just smiles — in a way that kind of reminds Rose of Juleka’s smile, soft and private. But Minouette is nothing like Juleka. Not that Juleka couldn’t be a hero — but Minouette’s pretty personable. Extroverted, maybe.

Though Rose can see the similarities, she doesn’t think it means anything.

Other than the fact that maybe, just *possibly* she wants to date Juleka.

Minouette returns again after Heroes’ Day.

“It’s been a long day,” she says, “and I’m sure you’re tired.”

"How many people have you talked to?" Rose asks. "So many..."

"I know," Minouette says. "I'm tired, but this is important work. We prioritized those akumatized for the first time today over those who had already been akumatized."

"If you need a break, I'm here," Rose says. "We can just chill."

"Cool," Minouette says. She does just that, slipping inside and closing the window behind her. "Thanks."

And they do chill. Rose puts on her more lowkey playlist, and Minouette spends some time just lying on the carpeted floor, relaxing.

"Thanks, wildflower," Minouette says as she's about to leave.

"I should really come up with a nickname for you," Rose muses. "How do you like 'wildcat'?"

"Call me whatever you want," Minouette says, "but...I do like that."

Rose watches Minouette leave.

Minouette returns a few days later.

"Where's the fire, wildcat?" Rose asks as she opens the window.

"No fire. Just...tonight's a dull night. I wanted to see you." Is...Minouette blushing? "That's all. I can leave." She turns to go.

"Wait!" Rose exclaims, despite herself. "Stay."

Minouette smiles. "...if you insist, wildflower."

It's awkward, for a moment, because there's nothing that they really talk about for a while — until Minouette spots the sheet music on Rose's desk. "You like music?"

"*You* like music?" Rose asks. "Oh. Wait. Is your name based on 'minuet'?"

Minouette smiles. "I didn't think people would really...get that. I chose it because it doesn't already exist as a word, and also because of the music pun."

"Neat," Rose says. "What do you think?"

"I think it'll be a nice sounding song." Minouette examines it closer. "Are you in a band?"

"Lead singer!" Rose chirps. "We're called Kitty Section."

"Wait. You were involved in the Silencer incident?" Minouette stops in her tracks. "I..."

"That was my best friend's brother," Rose says.

"Oh," Minouette says, but it doesn't sound quite genuine. "Tell me about her."

"We're kind of...opposites of each other," Rose begins. "She's really nice, but a lot of people don't see that, since she's really shy. I see more of her than a lot of people do. She has a lot of ambitions, and a lot of big dreams, but she's also clinically diagnosed with anxiety, so I do my best to support her however I can."

Minouette looks away. "She sounds nice."

"I think you two would like each other. You kind of remind me of her," Rose muses.

Minouette straightens. “I have to go.”

“Wait!” Rose says, just as Minouette is about to leave. “I’m...I know I shouldn’t be sorry about the hospital thing. I’m not going to apologize. I just...I don’t know. If you ever need support, I’m here for you.”

“Ladybug said I could tell one person,” Minouette murmurs. “I...”

“Is something wrong?” Rose asks.

“I—I think you should know something,” Minouette says. “Plagg, claws in.”

In a flash of green light, Minouette transforms into...

“Juleka?” Rose asks. “I...”

“I’m sorry, Rose,” Minouette — *Juleka* — says. “I didn’t mean to...lead you on, or something. Or deceive you.”

“I...I don’t feel deceived at all,” Rose says. She takes a step back — she doesn’t want to overwhelm Juleka. “Actually, this kind of solves a problem. I had a bit of a crush on Minouette, but...I’m in love with you. And now I know you’re both the same.”

“I...” Juleka freezes. She tries to brush her bangs out of her eyes, but they fall back into place. “I think I love you too.”

Rose hugs her — anything else would be too much pressure.

Juleka hugs back.



Salvation

by @Oblivionhold on tumblr

beta read by @DaHoomanPrincess on tumblr

Rose did not like Hawkmoth. Hawkmoth hurt other people by making his akumas attack them, and hurt the people he turns into akumas by taking advantage of them in their worst moments. Even before he akumatized most of her classmates, Rose had decided that Hawkmoth was clearly not a nice man. Now? Well, now she would even go so far as say that Hawkmoth was a jerk. Maybe even...a bad man.

Normally, she doesn't like saying stuff like that. People are too complicated to boil down to merely being 'good' or 'bad'. Everyone has their good and bad points, even people like Hawkmoth. But after everything he's done, it's difficult to think of any motivation that is worth all this suffering...like today's.

She doesn't know what caused Tearrain to become sad enough to get akumatized, as the akuma wasn't making any sort of recognizable words, but that just made it worse. Making someone sad enough that they just become a blubbering mess and turning them into an akuma is absolutely reprehensible in the first place, and making that akuma's power to cry tears that cause other people to get sad enough that they cry uncontrollably, too... Well. That's definitely 'bad person' territory. So when Ladybug showed up and asked for her help, of course Rose said yes.

“So what's the plan?” she asked after transforming.

“Tearrain gets stronger and, more importantly, faster the more sadness there is in the area around her, and her ability causes a lot of sadness.” Ladybug started to spin her yo-yo. “Chat's been rounding up all of the victims he could find and putting them all in a park, so all you really need to do is cheer them up with your Gift. That should slow Tearrain down enough for us to get her akumatized object.”

Rose, or rather Pigella, saluted. "Can do, Ladybug!"

After a couple of minutes of following Ladybug on the rooftops of Paris, they dropped down into a public park that Rose had never been in before. Chat Noir was, indeed, waiting for them, standing in front of a fairly large crowd, maybe 20 or 30 people, all with bowed heads and their faces in their hands. Looking over the crowd, Rose could see that Tearrain's tears didn't discriminate. Everyone from small babies to elderly people were bawling their eyes out. Rose could even recognize a few members of the crowd; she was pretty sure she saw André the ice cream man, and Nadja the reporter, and...

Rose saw a familiar shade of purple hair nearby a slightly less familiar flash of teal. She nearly ran towards them, but...

"Nice to see you, Pigella." Chat Noir waved semi-casually, though his trademark smirk was nowhere to be seen. "I'd prefer it to be under better circumstances, though."

Pigella nodded and hoped her frustration didn't show too much. "Me too." She wanted to run over to Juleka and help immediately, but then she'd have to explain to Chat Noir why she's so impatient about helping this particular civilian, and she wasn't confident in her ability to come up with a convincing lie. She'd reveal her identity to help out Juleka if need be, but she could afford to wait a couple of minutes. "So is this everyone?" She waved her arm towards the crowd.

Chat shrugged. "As many as I could find without breaking into people's houses, at least, so hopefully it's enough."

"Do you think you can handle this many at once?" Ladybug put her hand on Rose's shoulder with a worried expression on her face. "It's theoretically possible to Gift a whole crowd at once, but..."

"I can try, at least." Rose smiled, though she kept looking at Juleka out of the corner of her eye. "I mean, worst case scenario is it doesn't work and Daizzi gets a lot of snacks, right?"

"Kind of... It's not really healthy to transform that much in a short amount of time, for you or for the kwamis." Ladybug sighed and shook her head. "But I suppose we'll cross that bridge if we come to it. You ready?"

"As I'll ever be." Rose said, turning to directly face the crowd (and Juleka, of course.)

(Later, when Juleka said she hoped Pigella was feeling better because the superhero had looked awful after she saved her and her brother, Rose decided the exhaustion was worth it.)

Juleka had to admit that being a superhero sucked sometimes. She was a part-timer and she had already flaked out on social events twice; she couldn't imagine what Ladybug and Chat Noir had to deal with. She couldn't really say no to Ladybug when she asked for help, though, and so she made up something about her anxiety and just left Rose behind at the Liberty.

She was glad she had a girlfriend who understood her well enough to not be offended by sudden claims of anxiety, but that just made leaving her behind to go punch a supervillain harder.

It REALLY didn't help that almost as soon as Ladybug gave her her miraculous, the akuma, Whirlfool, had swept in and stolen the Liberty, with her girlfriend and family inside. As far as she, Ladybug, and Chat Noir could tell, they (and the rest of the stolen boats) were safe and healthy, but they were trapped inside Whirlfool's body. Normally, this would be a problem solved by a Clout, but unfortunately, you cannot punch water. Well, you can, but it doesn't really do anything, and...

Juleka shook her head. That wasn't important right now. What was important was their plan.

“So, one last time.” Ladybug, Chat Noir, and Juleka, as Purple Tigress, were sitting in a triangle on a rooftop near where Whirlfool was floating. The giant waterspout akuma thankfully had not noticed them yet, which meant it was just smashing some buildings.

...That sounded bad, but the Miraculous cure would fix everything, so...

Ladybug started talking again, and Juleka tried to focus on her. “Chat will distract the akuma, I'll sneak up on it with the lucky charm, and then Purple Tigress punches it. Alright?”

Chat and Juleka both nodded. It was incredibly simple, or at least as simple as any plan that involves freezing a supervillain with a magically summoned liquid nitrogen container could be, but at that moment Juleka was kind of freaking out so it was probably a good thing the plan wasn't too complicated.

“Okay, team, let's do it!” Ladybug stood up and ran off with Juleka close behind, while Chat split off to go attract Whirlfool's attention. Juleka had to admit it was kind of weird to see how easily Ladybug flipped around the city while carrying the giant liquid nitrogen tank, but superpowers did amazing things.

Chat had managed to draw Whirlfool's attention and was busy dodging his watery arms, so Ladybug just headed straight for the monster's back. She twisted some sort of knob on the tank and threw it at Whirlfool. The tank hit the monster, was enveloped by his watery body...and then suddenly most of the akuma became ice. “Tigress!” Ladybug called.

Tigress, perched on a nearby rooftop, clenched her fist and focused. Clout was based on her emotions, and Juleka had emotions to spare. Sometimes, this was a problem, but right now, she was really glad about how much stuff she felt. She was annoyed that she got dragged away from her girlfriend for this. She was afraid that her girlfriend and family might get hurt because of Hawkmoth and his akuma, and she was angry at Hawkmoth for that. And maybe she was a little happy that she'd be able to do something about it. So as she shouted “Clout!”,

she jumped towards the mostly-frozen akuma and pulled her arm back before punching forward and shattering the akuma into pieces.

(In retrospect, Juleka thought as she held Rose tight back on the Liberty, that was pretty dangerous. Still, Rose didn't seem too upset, and Juleka couldn't help but crack a grin as Rose explained how cool Purple Tigress looked as she came to rescue everyone.)

Rose had long since accepted that she would rarely get called upon to help Ladybug and Chat Noir. She was happy to help, of course, but the Pig Miraculous' power was very situational, and she had assumed that she would only ever get called in to help people who were sad or lonely or otherwise missing something they want.

That...wasn't the case, this time. Honestly, she wasn't quite sure why Ladybug had chosen her for this mission. She really couldn't see how Gift was useful here. Speed Demon was mad about not winning a race, so now he could run really fast. He was running around annoying people more than anything else, but it was very difficult actually fighting him, especially since...

"Sorry about this." Juleka mumbled from behind her.

"No, we should be the ones apologizing." Rose shook her head. "We shouldn't have gotten you involved."

After giving Rose her miraculous, Ladybug immediately used her Lucky Charm for a hint. That Lucky Charm (a snow globe) had led them to a nearby antique shop, and Speed Demon had followed. The good news was that the cramped quarters and clutter everywhere meant that Speed Demon couldn't get to max speed and kept tripping over himself. The bad news is that A) this didn't slow him down enough for the superheroes to actually attack him, and B) they now had innocent bystanders to worry about. The antique store owner, an elderly man, was an obvious target for Speed Demon, which meant that Ladybug and Chat Noir had to protect him,

which just made him a bigger target for Speed Demon. Rose, meanwhile, was assigned to guard the only customer in the antique shop...which was Juleka.

Rose sensed Speed Demon approaching from her right and moved to block, causing him to redirect into a shelf full of snow globes. Rose winced at the sound of breaking glass. "Careful not to step on the glass, Juleka." she commanded.

"Uh, right." Rose briefly wondered why Juleka sounded so unsure and so quiet, since she was generally louder than this. "Thanks for the tip, I guess?"

Rose turned around to ask Juleka if something was up, but almost as soon as she did, Juleka's eyes widened in fear. Before Rose could really react, she felt someone grab her left leg, and at the same time, Juleka grabbed her arms. The person who grabbed her leg attempted to pull her and trip her, but Juleka held firm, letting Rose keep her right leg on the ground. Rose took the opportunity to twist around, enough to see that Speed Demon had indeed stopped to try and trip her up and remove her miraculous. She then kicked up with her right leg and tried to kick Speed Demon in the face with her left; Speed Demon dodged, but in doing so, he let go of Rose, and after grimacing a bit, he ran away.

Rose took a deep breath and looked around for the akuma. "Thanks for the help, Juleka. I would have been a goner without you." she called out over her shoulder, not wanting to get distracted again.

Juleka mumbled something in response, but Rose didn't hear it. Rose suddenly had an idea, like a lightbulb had just gone off above her head. She was distracted by Juleka because she forgot that she was Pigella right now and didn't remember why Juleka would act like they're strangers. This left her vulnerable to attack.

Wouldn't the same, therefore, apply to Speed Demon?

"Trust me on this, Juleka." Rose whispered.

Juleka had barely said “Uh, ok?” before Rose turned around. As expected, Rose vaguely heard some noise from behind her, so even before she stopped moving she turned back around.

“Gift!”

As expected, Speed Demon was still running towards her, and seemed surprised at her turn. He stared at his Gift (visions of him on the gold medal podium with his family looking on, proud) long enough for Chat to sneak over and cataclysm his shoes.

(Rose tried not to look too embarrassed when Juleka later openly wondered how, exactly, Pigella knew her name.)

As Juleka tried and failed to punch Chat in the face, she briefly wondered how he kept getting mind controlled so much. Like, sure, sometimes he has to push Ladybug out of the way of a mind controlling beam or whatever, but that didn't happen this time. He just got one of Hat Trick's mind controlling hats shoved onto his head during a scuffle. Did he like getting mind controlled or something?

In any event, it meant that Ladybug had to go get help. She picked Purple Tigress first, and after a surprisingly short amount of time after giving Juleka her miraculous, Ladybug showed back up with Viperion in tow. Their plan was simple: Ladybug would fight Hat Trick, Purple Tigress would fight his mind controlled army and make sure it didn't grow any larger, and Viperion would make sure that neither of them got brainwashed.

Of course, simple didn't mean easy. The hats that brainwashed people also seemed to reduce their intelligence enough that the only tactic they could think of is 'run at your target', but that was cold comfort when there must have been at least 20 of them running at her. Not to mention that she was protecting a group of civilians, including, naturally, her girlfriend, so she couldn't even just run away and lead the mob in a merry chase.

She managed to deflect Chat's baton strike and redirected it to the side, causing him to hit one of his brainwashed allies. Juleka silently apologized to the person she hit, but it didn't even seem to slow them down at all, as Juleka had to dodge a tackle attempt from them only moments afterwards.

She knew that her job was a delaying action, that she wasn't really intended to 'succeed' in fighting off 20 people, but Juleka still couldn't bear the thought of letting anyone else get mind controlled...especially her girlfriend. So after she kicked away another mindless civilian, Juleka checked over her shoulder to make sure Rose was still there.

She was. Rose smiled nervously. "Don't worry about us, Purple Tigress. We'll be fine."

Juleka nodded back and turned back just in time to dodge another of Chat's baton strikes. She hissed in frustration and shoved him back into another of his mind controlled colleagues, and then knocked away a third civilian who tried to put a hat on her, before backing up slightly and scanning the crowd for the next attack. It wasn't really physically tiring, the superhero powers she got from the Miraculous included more than enough stamina to deal with a bunch of unpowered people and a superhero that is just charging forwards mindlessly, but mentally? She was exhausted. She really didn't know how Ladybug and Chat Noir handled these dangerous, one-mistake-and-you're-gone fights so often...and in retrospect, she should probably give Chat a little slack for getting caught, because...

She briefly felt something brush against her tiger ears. She immediately looked up to see one of Hat Trick's victims, holding one of his mind-controlling hats, about to put it on her. Juleka panicked and reached up to stop him, while he suddenly thrust it downwards. Juleka thought she was doomed...

But suddenly, the man was knocked over from behind, and the hat tumbled harmlessly from his hands, falling to the floor. Juleka took a deep breath and smiled at her savior. Rose, for her part, smiled sheepishly before turning to the man. "Sorry about that!" She called out.

Juleka chuckled to herself. "Thanks, Rose. Sorry I spaced out like that."

She blushed (would Purple Tigress know Rose's name?) and quickly turned around before Rose could respond.

(For the record, Rose was more amazed that Purple Tigress knew her name than she was suspicious. Still, Juleka was extra quiet as her girlfriend recounted the story to her family.)

They hadn't lost. Not yet. But it certainly felt like they had, watching Monarch's speech come from a giant illusion of his head, which he could make because he had the Fox and Turtle Miraculous, and the Bee, and every other Miraculous except for the Ladybug and Black Cat. Thinking of how Roarr and all the other kwamis must feel nearly drove Juleka to tears.

At the same time, something really did drive Rose to tears, and she had called Juleka earlier, bawling her eyes out. Juleka had rushed over to see what was going on. Rose's parents said she didn't tell them anything, but she was still clearly upset; as soon as Juleka got into the room, Rose nearly threw herself into Juleka's chest and sobbed into it for what felt like hours. Juleka just sat down with her and held her close

Eventually, Rose had calmed down enough that Juleka felt comfortable enough to ask. "What's wrong?"

"It's..." Rose sniffled. "It's just that...Hawkmoth or Shadowmoth or whatever he calls himself, he's going to hurt them..."

Juleka briefly thought Rose was talking about the kwamis, but there was no way she would have known about them, so clearly that wasn't it. "Ladybug and Chat Noir, you mean?"

Rose froze slightly before relaxing. "Uh, yeah. It's just...now their job is so hard, and they can't even get someone else to help because now, uh, Monarch has all the other miraculouses, so.."

"Yeah, they sure have it tough." Juleka thought about it for a couple of seconds before shaking her head. "But people can still help them." Rose blinked quizzically, so Juleka continued. "I mean, you don't have a miraculous, right? But you still help people every day. If nothing else, you help me."

"I guess that's true, but...how am I supposed to help Ladybug and Chat Noir? I don't know who they are, I can't bake cookies for them or give them flowers."

"You don't have to. Just by being nice you're helping them. More happy people means there are less akumas, which means Monarch has to fight on his own, right?"

"Oh, that's right!" Rose beamed at her, and Juleka smiled back. "Let's start right now, then!"

As Rose and Juleka broke their hug apart, Juleka asked "Start what?"

"Making cards for people! I have lots of blank cards in that top drawer, and I have some pens...somewhere, and..." Rose's head was on a pivot, looking in every direction and occasionally pointing somewhere.

Juleka shook her head, smiling softly. "Sounds good, but I'm not sure if I..."

"You absolutely need to help." Rose turned around to smile at Juleka, though her smile was much softer than her previous. "I can't do it without you...and besides, you're clearly upset about this too. Getting your mind off of things might help for now."

Juleka blinked in surprise before chuckling. "You know me too well." As she walked forward, Juleka briefly thought that she was the luckiest girl in the world.



You've Got A Friend In Me

art and writing by @team-leo-v

beta read by JuliaFC and Faerie

It was the first day of school, and Rose felt hopeful. How could she not? School was awesome—she got to make cool, kind friends, and then she got to learn with them!

And so Rose arrived at the classroom early. Maybe she could get a good start— she knew a few people in the class already, and...

... and she heard the telltale noise of Chloé chewing out someone. Rose sighed. Of course she had to get stuck with Chloé.

"I can't believe *I'm* stuck with you, I mean, look at you, you look so lame! And you can't even speak proper French!" Chloé stomped, the poor boy she was chewing out tense but refusing to move.

Chloé really was determined to make this school year exhausting for everyone. Rose was looking for a seat that wouldn't get her yelled at. She initially planned to sit next to her friend Jean, but she noticed a tall girl alone at a corner in the back hiding behind Ivan, the tallest guy in their batch. Chloé was, luckily, facing away from the door; and so Rose resolved to sneak behind her so she wouldn't get involved.

Rose sat down beside the girl, and the first thing she noticed was that she was pursing her lips. *She really must want to stay silent*, she mused, and the implications didn't let Rose dwell on how the second thing she noticed about the girl was that her long hair's tips were dyed (*Mom'll never let me do that*).

She probably doesn't want to talk, Rose thought, so she dug out a piece of paper and wrote. *"How are you? It's nearly 8h30, so Maîtresse Lambotte might be here any second. Maybe Chloé'll stop then."*

The girl glanced at the note, then at Rose, and then began to scribble her answer. Meanwhile, Rose scanned the surroundings, and it felt like Chloé had *absolutely no intention of stopping her continuous whining.*

"Leave my friend alone! I don't know why you think you're so important that you can be mean to Nino like that, but no matter what, no one gets to insult someone else!" a girl yelled, standing between Chloé and the boy. Chloé got mad and screamed at her.

Nino grabbed at the girl's arm. "Marinette, please just leave her alone, I'm used to it."

"That's because, unlike you peasants, I'm *really* important! You'll see, I'll call my daddy and you'll need to find a new school!" Chloé hmph-ed as she typed on her phone. "I don't believe the principal, he thinks he can put you and me in the same class? China, Morocco, what's next? Magicked-up people? Ridiculous! Utterly ridiculous!"

Rose felt a prod on her fingers— the girl had replied.

"I'm scared she'll decide to be mean to me like she's now doing with that girl," it read, *"I wish Chloé could stop yelling."*

Ah. So that's why.

"I've been Chloé's classmate since préparatoire. Every second is like walking on eggshells, just so you don't get in detention." Rose sighed, writing her confession in a way so that her seatmate could see it. *"Her dad's powerful so she thinks she can get away with anything. She already got another kid suspended."*

“Oh, that’s horrible!! I know her around, but I didn’t know she could somehow be worse.”

“I know this isn’t reassuring,”—the girl nodded as Rose wrote. She just gave her a sheepish expression—*“but almost everyone thinks you’ll be better off if you just give in. I think otherwise,”*—Rose received a raised eyebrow—*“Not exactly otherwise, but I know she can be better if she tried. I don’t want to go to detention.”*

“It sounds so scary.”

“It is. The other kids don’t like her being mean, but they’re too scared to help like what that girl is doing. She’s very brave! I hope Chloé won’t start being mean to her from now on, because that’s how she got someone expelled. The other kids usually try to help after, like ask you if you’re okay and be your friend for the day. Nobody will ever pick on you after she does.”

The girl smiled. *“Awesome :)”*

Both heard the door creak, and straightened themselves up for Maîtresse Lambotte. The usual introductions happened, and everyone had to say their name. Rose didn’t notice (and she most likely forgot) that her seatmate hadn’t written her name. She was nervous, and so Rose did what her mom did when she was nervous, and offered to hold her hand. She accepted.

“I’m Juleka. Juleka Couffaine,” she said, in a faint yet audible voice, and immediately sat down.

Rose pointed to herself, asking if she was next, and got a yes. *“And I’m Rose, Rose Lavillant.”*

New friend achieved...?, thought Juleka, as she waved goodbye to Rose at the end of the day. She felt like she was so quiet nobody wanted to talk to her, but Rose *listened*. Few kids did that.

Luka, her brother, was already waiting at the stairs when she got held up by the many students passing through. He was always the more responsible one, the one who Mom trusted to take them both to and from school.

“So, how was class today?” He waved, sporting a large smile. “Did it go well? I had people I knew from last year, so everything from my end went smoothly.”

“Uh...” She stopped to think. “I have a... kind-of friend? Her name’s Rose... I don’t know. Maybe I’ll ask her tomorrow if she thinks I’m a friend. I’d be really embarrassed if I called her a friend and she doesn’t call me one.” Juleka grumbled.

“I’m pretty sure she might be happy to call you one,” Luka reassured. “Do you think she’s kind enough to?”

Juleka grinned. “Oh, she’s very kind. Now that you mention it, I don’t think she’d be the type to *not* consider someone a friend after a day of talking. She’s very friendly! See, a mean girl was being annoying...”

Rose stayed with Juleka after that first day. She did talk to her other classmates and caught up with her friends over the past weeks, but Juleka rarely talked to others. Even though there was that occasional wave, she didn’t go out of her way to meet someone else. Rose shook her head and ignored it.

Maybe that could be for another time, she thought, as she wrote everything in her diary. Tomorrow, her class had something very important planned— they were going to have an out-of-school trip! Maîtresse Lambotte had announced a few days ago that they were going to the zoo for their Science class, and Rose hadn’t been there for a year now, so it’s no wonder why she’s so excited.

...Rose ended up oversleeping. She wondered how late she had to sleep when she didn't usually need much. Her neck was a bit stiff, but she ignored it; sheer panic shooed away her drowsiness, as she saw the time on her glaring alarm clock.

They were supposed to meet at the school at 9:30, but it was already pushing 9. *She shouldn't have slept late and needed to take those 5 more minutes.* Her dad was already waiting for her, so she decided to take along some random biscuits, to eat it as breakfast in the métro, and sprinted to prepare.

Juleka was surprised when Rose ran to her in a huff, clenching her backpack and sweating. True, she had been wondering where she was, *Maybe she's late?*, but luckily Maîtresse Lambotte had something to take care of and didn't start rounding them up yet.

"Rose?" she exclaimed.

Rose set her bag on the seat, slumping. "Hi Juleka, good morning! I ended up oversleeping, but at least I'm not that late..."

Juleka smiled and patted her on the back. She got lost in her thoughts as Rose talked to a classmate (she thought his name was Jean), when (previously frazzled, but she calmed herself) Maîtresse Lambotte finally showed up.

"You're all here, right?" she muttered, and her gaze moved from place to place as if she was doing a mental headcount. "You're all here... so! Today, we're going to the zoo! We're behind on schedule, so I'm going to explain when we get there, but for now I'm going to have to ask you to be quiet and stay in the queue on the subway. Shall we go now?"

"Yes, Maîtresse."

“This is a Rodrigues fruit bat, and as you can see, they’re mostly resting. They only become very active at the end of the day. They’re endangered, so the...” Maîtresse Lambotte lectured, but Rose only paid half a mind to it as she hung at the back of the class with Juleka and gushed over the animals.

They’d already toured a fair amount into the zoo when Rose felt her head hurt. But she was too engrossed at the dome forest to care... until when they exited it, and it hurt so much she couldn’t ignore it anymore. She winced.

“Rose, are you okay?” Juleka asked. Her friend had been touching her own head for a long enough time that she got concerned.

“My head hurts... and maybe my stomach too, but mostly my head,” Rose hissed in pain. “I think dad’s over there.”

Alarm bells rang in her head. Normally, Juleka would like to avoid talking with the teacher, but this was an emergency, so she skulked around her classmates and poked Maîtresse Lambotte’s arm.

“Yes, Juleka?” Maîtresse Lambotte crouched to her level, nodding to tell her she may speak.

“Rose has a really bad headache,” she mumbled, “and she wants to go to her dad.”

Maîtresse Lambotte nodded in sympathy. “Tell her to go as soon as possible! That could be serious.”

Juleka asked if she could accompany Rose for a while and Maîtresse Lambotte nodded again, though she remembered she hadn’t asked Rose yet if she could. *But I want to, though... the zoo won't go away anytime.*

She and Rose went to look for her dad, but Rose stopped. "Juleka, thank you for going with me, but I don't want you to miss out on the day here. Go back to the group, I can take care of myself, you know?" She grinned, but immediately after, she winced again and clutched her head.

Rose's dad finally noticed, and he ran over to them. "Oh sweetie, what happened?"

Juleka piped up. "She has a bad headache. We don't know what it is, but it's bad."

He smiled, holding her hands together and shaking them. "Tell your teacher I'm taking her to the hospital. Thank you for telling me."

Juleka didn't end up tagging along. She informed Maîtresse Lambotte about Rose, and she tried to enjoy the trip, even though it was lonely without her being there. *Because that's what Rose would want.*

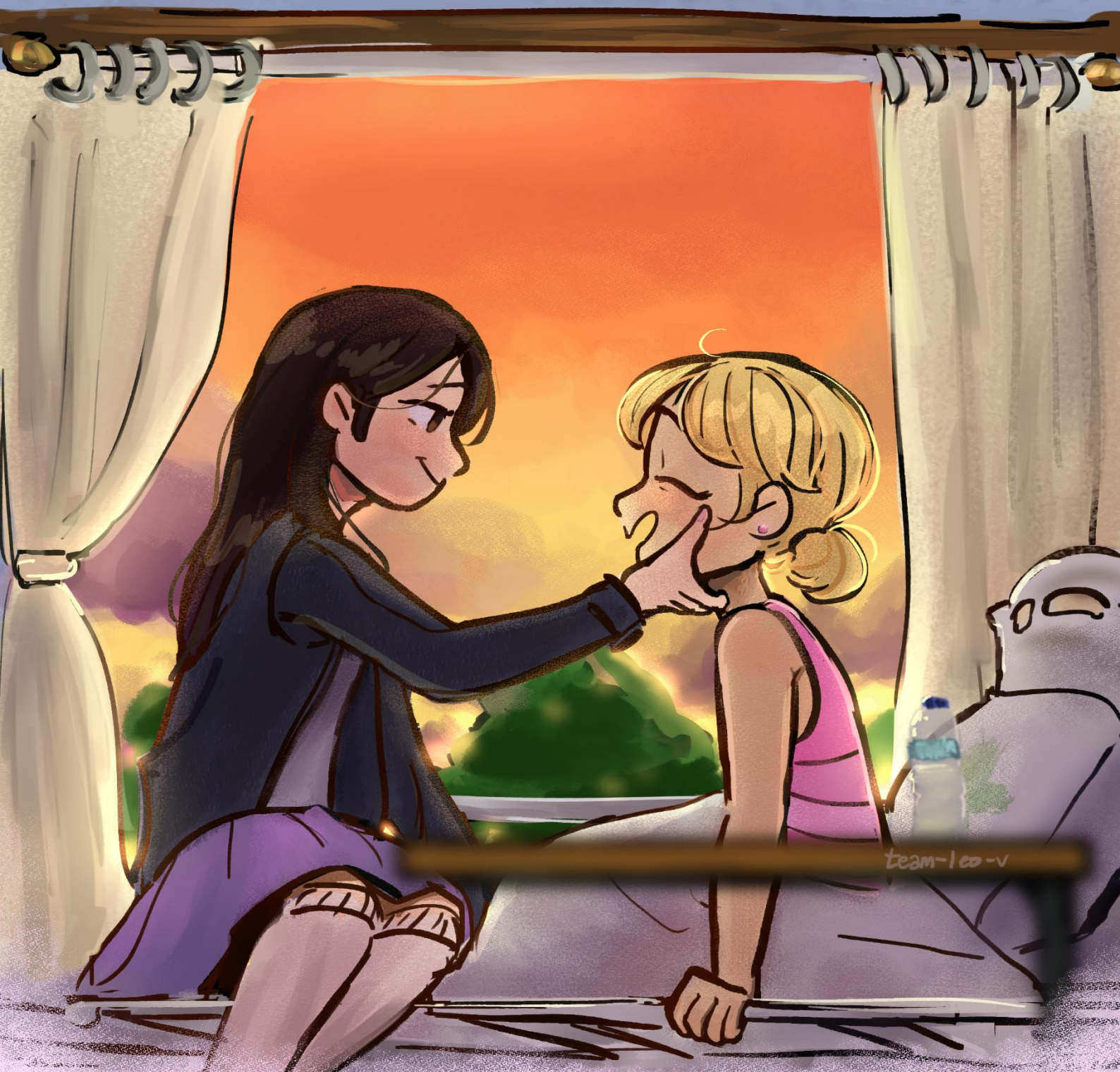
School let out for the day and they had to go home after an exhausting trek around 14 hectares—but Juleka went straight to begging her mom to go to the hospital after dinner. She almost forgot she didn't know what hospital they were staying at, but luckily Maîtresse Lambotte had gotten the room number from M. Lavillant and thoughtfully passed it to her mother, Anarka.

What if I got the wrong room? Juleka thought over and over, scared of being embarrassed, but her mom seemingly did not care and opened a random door. Thankfully, they seemed to get the right one, as Anarka went straight to talking to M. Lavillant.

And one thing was for sure. She was very happy to see Rose, even if she was sick. She looked pretty in the sunset.

"Juleka!" Rose groggily said, reaching for her water bottle. She ran over to hug her, pulling back to wipe off something near her eye. Rose must've recently woken up. "Rose! How are you?"

Rose drank. "I don't know how I fell asleep, it hurt a lot, but I guess the medicine I had to drink earlier helped me. It still hurts a little, but I'm mostly fine."



“Well, I’m glad you’re okay.” Juleka beamed. “Do you think you can go to school tomorrow, or do you need to stay here?”

“If it goes away later, I think I should be good tomorrow. I hope this doesn’t happen again... My dad was really sad when I got it. He said something like, ‘I really wished you didn’t get it.’”

“That’s...” Juleka paused as she tried to say a word. “...o-mi-nous. Has it ever happened to you before?”

“Maybe, I remember something back when I was 5... but please tell me, did you enjoy the zoo? I’m bummed I had to go out, but I hope it was nice.”

Juleka thought. This clearly meant a lot to her. *I’ll ask our parents if we can hang out at the zoo sometime.*

“I did! It was great. There were giraffes and I heard they had a new animal, but I forgot which...”

They chatted for hours, their parents giving them something to snack on as Rose had food cravings (*Who can blame her? She doesn’t usually get to eat cheesecake...*) until it was an hour before closing time and Anarka and Juleka had to go home.

The next incident happened in French class (their last class) the following week, when Rose left her a note and went up to the teacher. Juleka’d noticed that she kept closing her eyes tight and rubbing them.

“It’s happening again. I hope you can see me after class? I think your mom already has my dad’s number, but just to be sure... 01 XX XX XX XX”

Juleka pursed her lips as Rose left the classroom, and tried to focus on the lesson.

“Rose!” Juleka opened the door at the speed of light once she got there at the hospital, but the first person she saw wasn’t Rose. Rose was sleeping, but this person was not.

“Shh— wait, Juleka?” A boy answered the door, and Juleka was surprised to see who it was.

“Jean? Why are you here?” she said. *Well, this was unexpected.*

“Uhh, I came along with my mom, since our moms know each other.” Jean pointed at the two women sitting on a bench at the side.

Oh. Juleka blinked, taking a guess at who Mme Lavillant was. She greeted her, and Mme Lavillant let her take a seat at a chair near the bed. She had nothing to do but wait (her mom was at the canteen), so she fiddled with her fingers and looked around. *Huh. Mme. Lavillant and Mme. Duparc (? That’s his last name, right? she thought,) both seemed to be wearing the same ID. Maybe they’re coworkers.*

Juleka tried to start a conversation with Jean when Rose finally woke up and stretched her arms. “Oh, hi, Juleka! Hi, Jean! And... Mom?” she exclaimed. “I didn’t know you were the one looking over me today. Did class end early—”

Rose got interrupted as Mme Lavillant sobbed and hugged her daughter. “Are you okay, dear?”

“I’m fine, Mom. It hurt so much...” Rose said, hugging her back.

“It’ll be okay, sweetie. We know how to handle this, and I’m sure the doctors here are very skilled.” Mme Lavillant caressed Rose’s face. “Now, your friends are waiting. Do you want to talk to them?”

Juleka and Jean kept bumping into each other whenever Rose was concerned. They became some kind of acquaintances, not really building a deep friendship, but they would talk to each other when they didn't have someone else to talk to. They learned to get along when they both used their snack breaks to go to the infirmary when Rose was there.

But even though both Jean and Juleka visited Rose multiple times over the weeks as her headaches got more frequent, the only thing their classmates picked up on was Jean and Rose together. Rose had been asked more than a few times about Jean, although she thought nothing of it. Yet Jean picked up on the intent, with his friends being more straightforward about their questions.

Because, of course, they were 8 years old! Rose eventually found out about what was happening in their class and facepalmed.

It was a day where she didn't have to go to the hospital (it was strong enough that she didn't need to go but still needed to get excused from class). She'd missed a lot of schoolwork and had to make up for it, so she became stressed at school until her head hurt and had to take a break. And now the three of them were here, sitting in her bedroom to check up on each other.

"You tell me what?" she screeched.

"Yeah, tell me about it." Jean rolled his eyes. "The guys think I like you! They don't know about your illness, but they do know I keep meeting up with you."

Juleka felt weird about that, when he continued, "You're a nice girl, Rose, but I don't like you like *that*."

"Come on, even if a boy keeps visiting me, that doesn't necessarily mean that." Rose pouted. Juleka nodded and spoke, "I'm practically attached to Rose in school. We even sat together for lunch! And for some reason, they don't do that thing with me... not that I want that to happen! Is it because I'm a girl and you're a boy that people treat us differently?"

“I’d just let it go if it didn’t reach Chloé...” Jean muttered.

“It *WHAT?!* ” Both Juleka and Rose were surprised. Juleka had been avoiding Chloé, so it was a little out of left field, but of course she would.

“Well... Chloé went up to me as school ended, and she had a really mean look on her face. She and Marinette, the girl Chloé calls Dupain-Cheng, by the way. Well, they had been scolded in class for having a fight. The teacher didn’t take it back when Chloé said she would call her dad, so Chloé was in a bad mood. I think she wanted to take it out on someone one last time, because she interrupted me and was like, ‘You there!’” he said, emulating Chloé’s high-pitched voice as best as he could, and the girls laughed. “‘Going to visit your little girlfriend?’ and I said, ‘Well, she *is* my friend, and she *is* a girl, so yeah, I am.’ Sabrina was behind her, and I don’t understand why she keeps following Chloé around, but I was really annoyed that time, so I accidentally said, ‘Why? Are *you* going home with *your* little girlfriend?’ Chloé got red-red.”

“Hey!” Rose half-heartedly scolded him, yet she had a slight laugh in her voice. Juleka repressed her laugh, but her grin was clear.

“Rose, I know that that was mean, but Sabrina wasn’t weird about it and only got mad when Chloé got mad. And I don’t think I want to apologise to Chloé, so...”

Rose had a moment of realisation. “Let’s just hope Chloé doesn’t remember any of that.”

Jean stilled. “Oh no.”

“So, team, do we have any ideas?” Jean started.

Rose looked down, deep in thought, while Juleka raised a hand. “My mom told me something before...”

“Shoot.”

“What if Rose—” Juleka said, chuckling, “—fake-punches Jean to show that she doesn’t—”

Both of them immediately shut it down. “Juleka!” “That’s mean!”

“Guys, what if we just tell them the truth?” Rose suggested, slightly frowning at the others.

“Why didn’t we start with that?”

“I have something to tell you all,” Rose began, staring at her classmates as she poked at her lunch.

Juleka was silent, sitting between her and Jean. Jean had asked some of their classmates (mostly his friends) to sit with them in the cafeteria at lunch time. It had taken him some time, as the other kids seemed doubtful... as if they were scared; of Chloe, maybe? They appeared to be only agreeing to sit with them because their curiosity to find out what was going on between Jean and Rose was stronger than their fear to be Chloé's next victim.

“Jean and I...” she started saying, but the voices of their classmates perked up, making it harder for Rose to talk. Eventually, she shouted, “I’m not done!”

Marinette waved her hands in front of the others and pointed at Rose, so Rose continued, “I’m saying that Jean and I, we’re just friends.”

A few looked disappointed, and Jean frowned at that. “Our moms are friends. They don’t want to leave us at home when they hang out, so we have to go together.”

“And besides, it’s not like we’re all alone,” Rose added, leaning on Juleka’s shoulder. “My best friend Juleka is always with us too.”

Juleka looked at Rose with wide eyes. She had never called her a best friend before.

“Yeah!” Jean insisted. “There’s really nothing happening between us, I promise. Boys and girls can be just friends, you know?”

After they’d finally convinced the others that there was nothing between Rose and Jean, Rose and Juleka settled in the classroom for their afternoon classes. At that moment, Juleka looked at her seatmate, frowning. She tried to speak a couple of times, yet stayed silent. But eventually, she took hold of her courage, took a deep breath, and muttered, “Hey, Rose... about the best friend thing, did you really mean it?”

Rose turned to her and smiled. “Of course I did! Why wouldn't I?”

“Maybe you just... said it wrong.” Juleka fiddled her fingers. “I don’t know. I’m just... It feels too good to be true. It's only me, and you're awesome! I don't deserve it, right?”

She shrugged. “Absolutely not! You’re a great friend and really, you deserve that title, Jule,” Rose admitted. “You’ve always been there for me, like that time at the zoo.”

Juleka’s cheeks dusted in pink as she remembered something. “About that... and you’re free to say no, but I heard that the zoo will be closed very soon. Do you want to go there with me? Just to see what you missed out on?”

Rose squealed. “Free to say no? Are you kidding me, I'd love to!” Juleka couldn’t stop the spread of the smile on her lips.

Rose stopped short, thinking. “But... who’s going with us?”

"I actually had that planned for a while," Juleka mentioned. "My mom told me that she can bring us there, with my twin brother."

Rose's eyes widened. "Oh, I didn't know you had a twin brother. Is he in another class in our grade?"

"Uh, actually," Juleka said, with a crooked smile. "There's something I need to tell you. I... do you want to know a little secret, Rose?"

Rose had her legs on the seat, listening intently. "Yeah?"

Juleka bit her lip. "Truth is, I'm actually a year older than you. I had to repeat last year."

Rose gaped. "Why?"

"I wasn't really good at learning," Juleka confessed, looking away. "I only knew enough to pass. But when I had an accident and got really sick, I'd missed a lot of school. Mom was worried when my grades were dropping, and I couldn't catch up. My teacher thought it was better for me to repeat instead of having a lot of classes the next year."

Juleka stopped and took another long breath. "Honestly, when you came up to me on that first day of class, I was scared. I thought that maybe you magically knew about my situation and came to make fun of me. I was *really* surprised when you were so nice to me. And now, I just can't believe someone would like me enough to be my friend. I never had many friends."

When it was clear to Rose that Juleka didn't have anything else to say, she motioned to hug her, but stopped to silently ask her if it was okay to. Juleka nodded, and Rose hugged her very tight. "Aww, Jule..."

Juleka gawked, but she melted in Rose's embrace and hugged her back. Rose mumbled, "I will always be your friend."

“Are you sure? It’s too early to say that.” Juleka countered.

Rose nodded. “I’m sure.”



Flower Crowns

*by @zoenette on ao3
beta read by @dpanda_17*

Rose hadn't been expecting a superhero to knock on her window, but, when did she *truly* expect any of the strange things that happened to her?

At around one in the morning, she was fiddling with her pen as she attempted — code word: *attempted* — to do her English homework. She wasn't the strongest in the class, but she always looked forward to learning new words and phrases to use. She was currently fond of “oh my goodness” and “for the love of chocolate”.

Rose sighed and set her pen down, leaning back in her chair. The last few months had been rather... *rough* with all the procedures she'd had to go through, and she was more than ready for a break.

Knock knock!!

She jolted and spun around, quickly catching sight of a cat-like heroine tapping on the glass of her balcony doors. “Purple Tigress?” She asked cautiously, biting back a smile at the red tint that bloomed on her partner's cheeks. “What brings you here?”

“H-Hi,” Purple Tigress said with a small wave, a smile on her face. “I was wondering...” Rose watched as she swallowed and had to hold back the instinct to wrap her hand around her shoulders.

You love Juleka. Not your shy, sweet, lovable, ~~pretty~~ kind partner. Just Juleka. Only Juleka.

She couldn't explain the way her heart raced as she felt Purple Tigress' thumb rub against her arm. No words could fully enunciate every feeling that she felt.

“I was wondering...would you like to have a picnic with me?” She said shyly, and Rose felt her cheeks burn most definitely a bright pink. “I found a rooftop not far from here, and the whole thing can be entirely platonic.”

Rose smiled sweetly. “I’d love to.”

Her breath hitched in her throat as Purple Tigress smiled, interlocked their fingers, wrapped an arm around her waist, and jumped off the balcony. Her hands felt so warm even through the suit, and Rose felt like she was being wrapped in a big, warm, cuddly blanket. The scary part about that was that she *liked* that feeling. She liked how she was so much smaller than Purple Tigress, who nearly dwarfed her in height and her hands were so much bigger. She liked how she made her cheeks burn at the smallest things.

But Purple Tigress loved Pigella, not Rose. She loved the superheroine that saved the day, not the ordinary girl who enjoyed gardening and helping her friends at school. Besides, Rose loved Juleka, not her.

Or so she thought.

Rose let out a breath she didn’t know she was holding as their feet touched the ground of the rooftop and Purple Tigress let go of her waist — Rose nearly pouted at the lack of contact between them. Her eyes immediately widened as she took in the scene in front of her, immersed in the endless bouquets of flowers, wire, and floral tape on the table, as well as the fairy garden-esque picnic on the ground.

“H-How did you have time to set all of this up?” Rose asked softly, admiring the colorful petals of the flowers, then the layout of food on the pink and white checkered blanket. This had most likely taken *hours* to coordinate and make, and for her? Of all people? She had a hard time believing it.

She looked up as she heard her snort, shaking her head. “I originally made this all for Pigella, you know, the Pig Miraculous Holder?” Rose froze as Tigress continued. “She declined when I invited her earlier today, and, well, this *did* take me hours to set up. I didn’t want it all to go to waste, and you’re someone I trust, so I thought you might want to enjoy it with me. As friends.”

Rose internally cursed at herself. She remembered when Purple Tigress had asked her — as Pigella — if she was free tonight and she, being ignorant, had thought she was just asking her out again. A small pit grew in her stomach as she wondered: what if she knew *this* was why Tigress asked her?

“Do you not like it?” Rose heard Purple Tigress ask gently, and she spun around, oblivious to the way her partner’s cheeks turned a vivid red as she wrapped her arms around her torso.

“I love it. Why wouldn’t I? It was made with love, and everything’s beautiful and amazing and it’s so *you*.”

“How do you know ‘it’s so me’?”

Shoot.

Rose fidgeted with her fingers, quick to look down at her toes. “I’ve seen you on the news with Pigella, and the couple of times you’ve come to visit me, I feel like I’ve gotten to know you well enough to have a somewhat decent understanding as a human being. Call it intuition, I guess.”

And the fact that we save Paris nearly every day together. No big deal, though!

Purple Tigress smiled widely — *genuinely* — and squeezed her gently before gesturing towards the table. “Up for a little flower crown making?”

She grinned. “Of course.”

They walked over to the mini table filled with supplies. Rose couldn't help the giddy feeling she felt as she picked up some purple flowers — she didn't know exactly what they were called, Mylène would probably know — and silver wire and sat down on the picnic blanket. She really didn't have that much of an appetite, but as she watched Purple Tigress sit down across from her with some pink roses and gold wire.

“How do you even do this?” Rose asked, genuinely confused as she stared at the flowers, then the wires.

“Well — here let me show you,” Purple Tigress scooted over towards her, and Rose's cheeks burned an embarrassing shade of pink again. “First you're going to connect the two pieces of wire together and measure it around your head,” she said whilst demonstrating with her own.

“Like this?”

“Yeah! Now, you're going to trim the flowers — here are some scissors — and we're going to wire each flower stem. After that, we're going to wrap it with some floral tape and attach it to the crown.”

It took them around fifteen to twenty minutes to finish their crowns. Rose wasn't really keeping track of time, but she *had* finished three whole croissants, so she figured her estimate was accurate.

“You know,” Rose admitted as she put her crown on her head. “I made my crown be based on this girl I love.”

Purple Tigress's eyes widened. “Really?”

She nodded. “The girl I'm in love with...she's shy but so lovely. She's tall, has the most *beautiful* eyes, purple hair, and is genuinely so kind and lovely, but you're so lovely too, of course, and —“

She was cut off by Purple Tigress chuckling lightly. “You’re Pigella?”

Rose blinked. “Wha- how’d you know?”

“You’ve told me all of that before.”

“Oh.”

Purple Tigress let out a quiet giggle. “If I may ask, who do you love then?”

“This girl named Juleka in my class,” Rose said quietly, suddenly self-conscious about everything she said. “I know, it’s not what you would expect—“

“You know, I happen to know Juleka as well. Pretty well, actually.”

She blinked again. “What?”

“Detransform me.”

Rose froze as the suit disappeared and left Juleka — her *crush*! — in her place.

“Rose? Rose?” Juleka asked in a near frantic tone, waving her hands in front of her face. “Hey, are you okay? I’m sorry—“

Rose cut her off with a quick, but sweet, kiss. “Don’t be sorry. I’m processing this, but I promise you, this is more than okay with me.”

Juleka smiled and cupped her cheek — her hand was so gentle, so soft — as she captured Rose’s lips with hers.



hot chocolate with a bit of caramel

by @azalea_db on a03

beta read by @TheSnow3 on a03

The sliding door opened for her as she stepped into the second floor of one of her favourite malls. In front of her was a seating area with cushioned blocks which were comfortable to sit on. On her front right was a clothing store for school uniforms and such. And on her left was her favourite coffee and hot chocolate store.

She enjoyed coming here. It was peaceful and calm. It wasn't bustling and loud like how other stores were. She felt like she belonged in this store. Unlike others where she couldn't speak properly.

She entered the coffee shop which had no doors and stood in line behind a creole girl with brown hair and red tips. She felt the vibe of loudness and enthusiasm emit from the creole girl. She stepped a little away from the girl to keep her own sanity.

The creole girl turned towards her. The girl also had glasses.

"Hello! I'm Alya Césaire! What's your name?" The creole girl now known as Alya introduced herself.

"Ju- Juleka..." Juleka murmured softly.

Alya nodded. "I haven't seen you around here much. New?" Alya tapped her chin thoughtfully.

Juleka shook her head. She'd been coming here for months now but she had never seen Alya here.

"No, actually." Juleka answered, her voice a little bit louder. "I've been coming here for a long time. Never seen you around here though."

"Oh, I see." Alya nodded again. "I'm actually here with a friend, a girl with blue pigtails. Wanted me to order for her cause she's too shy to face the blond guy." Alya pointed to the guy she meant. "Isn't he hot?"

Juleka had no answer. She did not find guys hot. She was however more curious about the girl with a blonde pixie cut next to the guy Alya was talking about.

This carried on for days. Juleka started coming to the coffee shop on the second floor of the mall every day, even on days where there was no school. It became a habit at this point. Every day she would come and order either a cappuccino, hot chocolate or a frappuchino and every time it would be the little blonde who took the order. Juleka found it cute. And she was curious to why it was always the little blonde who took Juleka's orders.

"U-um... c-can I ask you a question?" Juleka said after paying for the hot chocolate she had just ordered.

"Of course!" The blonde who Juleka came to know as Rose replied cheerfully. "What's your question?"

"Why do you take all of my orders?" Juleka asked in a sudden rush of confidence.

"Cause I like you of course!" Rose replied in an instant.

Was what she wished. It sucked that she didn't have the courage to do so and it would only happen in her dreams. Sighing, she stood on the escalator to go to the second floor and stepped through the automatic door that led inside. The second floor was the same as always: seating area in front, a store at the front right and the coffee shop at the left. Juleka also noticed that Alya came here everyday with her friend, Marinette. Maybe they could help her.

She approached Alya cautiously, scared of what Alya would say to her. She need not be scared as when she approached Alya, she sprang on her and hugged her tight.

“I know what you want to do and I will help!” Alya declared.

Juleka didn't know what to say or do. She stood frozen in Alya's embrace. Juleka reached out a hand for anything to help her lose Alya's embrace. Juleka saw Marinette face palming and shaking her head as a no to Juleka, a sign to tell her not to ask Alya for help.

Juleka croaked out a 'why' as she finally freed herself of Alya's affectionate embrace.

Marinette mouthed out 'she comes up with the most convoluted plans and they DON'T work.'

Juleka felt a pang of disappointment. So she couldn't take help from Alya. Or she could and end up in an epic fail. She decided on the latter.

Marinette approached her as Juleka shook her arms off the stiffness from being hugged by Alya.

“You know how they say be yourself?” Marinette asked.

Juleka nodded.

“Well, don't do that.” Marinette said with certainty. “Or well, you could do that. It doesn't matter as long as it comes from the heart!”

“From... the heart...” Juleka repeated slowly, registering every word Marinette said.

She could do the exact way she had envisioned in her dream and there would be no problem, right? She sighed wistfully. That was her having high hopes.

Then Marinette spoke again. "If you have an idea, a dream, of how your confession would go, you could just follow that." Marinette suggested.

Juleka mentally thanked Marinette for narrating Juleka's own thoughts in a different way.

"I do actually." Juleka nodded. "Thank you both." Juleka thanked them and entered the coffee shop.

She could do this. She would do this.

She stood in the queue and waited for her turn to order. As always, Rose was the one to take Juleka's orders.

Juleka took in a deep breath and blurted out exactly what she has seen herself saying in her dream.

And Rose replied the same thing Juleka thought Rose would hopefully say in her dream.

Juleka left the store bright eyed and extremely overjoyed. Turns out it had happened exactly how she hoped it would happen.



